

# Learning Approaches as Constraints to Education Capabilities Development Among Students of Social Sciences at Makerere University, Uganda

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**Abstract:** Graduates of social sciences at Makerere University in Uganda have apparently low levels of higher education capabilities as evidenced in low labour productivity, due to, among other things, deficiencies in knowledge, skills and attitudes. Using data from interviews of five alumni, four lecturers of social sciences, and document reviews the author established that learning approaches used by most students quite often constrain their level of higher education capabilities development. While these students use the common learning methods such as group discussions, doing coursework, attending lectures and person reading; their levels of engagement with the subject matter are surface in nature as opposed to deep learning engagements. Actually, most students do rote-learning when the examinations are approaching and spend the rest of their time engaged in other non-academic activities. Quite often, the students take a minimalist approach to learning and are just interested in getting a degree regardless of the education capabilities developed. In this paper, I argue that the surface approach to learning used by students of social sciences at Makerere University limits their development of higher education capabilities. I therefore suggest that in order to develop the relevant education capabilities among students at Makerere University, and probably other universities in Africa, the authorities need to motivate students to learn; teach students how to learn; and develop analytical skills in students for the future development of Africa.

**Keywords:** Deep approach to learning, Higher education capabilities, Learning, Surface approach to learning

## 1. Introduction

This paper discusses the issue of limited higher education capabilities among the first-degree new graduates (2007-2016) from the Faculty of Social Sciences at Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda. The inadequate higher education capabilities are in form of limited knowledge and skills evidenced in poor practical reasoning, low levels of sociality and participation, low learning dispositions, and low science and technology competences. Actually, several graduates are 'half-baked' as they join the labour market both in the formal and informal sector employment plus political leadership. In this paper, I argue that students' approach to learning is one the key constraints to higher education capabilities development among the first-degree students of social sciences at Makerere University. Students are heavily involved in rote-learning practices and are examination-oriented, which limit their acquisition of the necessary higher education capabilities expected of a typical social sciences graduate.

## 2. Makerere University in Uganda

Makerere University provides both undergraduate and postgraduate education. The University started

in 1949 when Makerere Vocational School was converted into a university. The Vocational School had been established in 1922 with a population of 16 male students. It opened as a skills training centre for the people of East Africa. It later expanded in capacity and enrolment. In 1937, Makerere Vocational School developed into an institution of higher education offering post-secondary certificate courses (Sicherman, 2005:22). In 1949 Makerere became a university college affiliated to the University of London that awarded general degrees.

When the University of East Africa came into being in 1963, Makerere became a constituent college of the University of East Africa. In July 1970, Makerere University became an independent national university offering undergraduate and postgraduate studies in a variety of disciplines. As Sicherman (2005) notes, during the seven years of its membership of the University of East Africa (1963-1970), Makerere underwent a rapid and intense evolution in terms of course development and quality of teaching. The growth and development of Makerere continued in the 1970s. According to Kasozi (2003:xiii), Makerere University grew "from about 2,500 in 1970s to about 25,000 in 2001". Equally, Liang (2004) explains that at Makerere University (the largest university in

Uganda) enrolment increased more than four-fold from about 7,000 in 1993 to about 30,000 in 2002. By the beginning of 2016, the University was estimated to have a population of 42,000 students.

### 3. University Education Administration and Design at Makerere University

Makerere University designs her own curriculum content using her technical teams. College or departmental teams at Makerere determine the appropriate mix of theory and practice teaching, the professional relevance of a course or programme and the curriculum focus in terms of student needs. This autonomy creates room for flexibility in the university education processes regarding what is taught, how it is taught and what the students learn. In effect, the education capabilities developed are partially at the choice of the technical teams at the university and partially on the students' discretion and motivation to learn. The university offers courses in subjects ranging from the natural sciences to the social sciences, law or the humanities.

### 4. The Challenge

Although university education should develop in a student higher education capabilities (for instance practical reason, sociality and participation, learning dispositions, and science and technology) this does not seem to be the case among recent graduates (2007-2016) of social sciences from Makerere University. Actually, signals from the labour market suggest that there are average levels of new graduates' productivity at the workplace. For example, Wiegratz (2009), Asiimwe (2011) and Uganda (2011) provide evidence that the new graduates in Uganda have low labour productivity due to, among other things, deficiencies in knowledge, skills and attitudes. Besides, Muwonge (2009) reveals that Uganda's new graduates are taught at the workplace what to do instead of them working and that they lack skills which they should have obtained from university. Yet, as Billet (2009:827) asserts, "graduates are expected to have the capacities to engage immediately and effectively in the professional setting where they secure employment". However, this does not seem to be the case among the new graduates under discussion. Incidentally, Makerere University employs qualified lecturers who use teaching and assessment approaches plus instructional materials related to those applied elsewhere in Africa. Moreover, the University admits

well-qualified students from high school, majority of whom are academic high-flyers. Nonetheless, these students graduate from the university when they are weak in higher education capabilities. It appears that the way students approach learning is key in constraining their education capability development given that other complimentary learning resources are reasonably available. Therefore in this paper, I seek to answer two key questions: How do Makerere University students approach learning? How does the students' approach to learning at Makerere University affect their level of higher education capabilities development?

### 5. Capability

A capability can be regarded as a person's ability to perform important acts or reach states of being or as the different combinations of things a person is able to do or be (Saito, 2003; Walker & Unterhalter, 2007). Capability, inter alia, connotes knowledge, skill, learning, importance, and a need for individual promotion (Gasper, 2002,2007). The process of educating a person is a process of building or developing capabilities. Therefore, education at all levels, including university, ideally develops capabilities of people. Hence, one of the ways to understand the linkage between education and (human resource) development can be through the *capability approach*.

### 6. Theoretical Review: The Capability Approach

The capability approach was propounded and continuously improved by Amartya Sen in the 1980s and 1990s. It was developed as a conceptual framework for evaluating social conditions in terms of human wellbeing. According to Sen (1999) and Alkire (2016), the emphasis of the capability approach is that development should be seen as the expansion of human capabilities such as knowledge, health, a clean physical environment, and political freedom, not the maximisation of utility or its proxy, money income. Money income is a means to an end rather than an end in itself.

#### 6.1 The Capability Approach and Education

Education can be analysed in terms of contributions to capabilities development. The capability approach, therefore, can be used to analyse university education outcomes because the approach has "the plurality of purposes" for which it can

have relevance in different fields (Sen, 1992, cited in Robeyns, 2001:3). University education provides an opportunity to a student to develop multiple capabilities which can be educational or general in nature. For instance, university education can promote reasoning abilities that enable an individual to "distinguish between virtues and vices and then to *act accordingly*" (Flores-Crespo, 2004:3). Education provision at all levels can, therefore, be considered as a capability development process, but depending on what is taught and how it is taught. As some scholars argue, for education to develop capabilities, it must move from rote-learning to addressing the development needs and aspirations of the learners, their ability to think and reason, to build up self-respect and respect for others, to think ahead and to plan their future lives (Hoffmann 2006; Terzi, 2004). Therefore, the type of education given must be carefully designed and delivered to the learners.

The four higher education capabilities that are adapted to guide this paper are: sociality and participation (social relations and social networks); learning disposition; and practical reason (Walker 2006), plus science and technology (Terzi, 2007). University education should ideally provide such capabilities. It is permissible through certain methods to draw up capability lists that are context-relevant (Fukudar-Parr, 2003; Robeyns, 2003; Alkire, 2006). In this paper, I opted to consider the above four as the most relevant to the discussion of learning approaches and education capabilities.

## 7. Learning

Learning is the process through which an individual acquires knowledge, skills, capabilities, behaviours and attitudes in a given setting (Armstrong 2016). According to Billet (2009: 835), "learning is a continuous process that occurs across all kinds of activities and the range of settings where humans think and act. The on-going process of thinking, acting and learning co-occur (i.e. simultaneously); they are not separate". Learning may be incremental or transformational in nature. Learning can further be understood from learning characteristics, learning theories, strategies, approaches and learning principles. This understanding guides the teacher in making decisions about training design and in guiding the students on how to learn. Guidance is necessary because "how students construct knowledge, how they learn, and the beliefs they hold about what kind of knowledge and knowing"

is very important in higher education (Otting, Zwaal, Tempelaar & Gijsselaers, 2010:741-742), especially at university level. Moreover, how students learn determines how much they retain and are able to apply in the real world of work.

### 7.1 Learning Approaches and Higher Education Capabilities Development

Students have various approaches to learning. Students' approaches to learning refer to the manner in which students engage the same learning tasks differently; and this variation may affect the different learning outcomes (Marton & Saljo, 1997, cited in Balasooriya, Toohey & Hughes, 2009). An approach to learning can also be described as "an *orientation* or predilection for learning in a certain way... [or] how a student handles a particular task at a *particular time*" (Biggs & Moore, 1993:315). Some approaches used by students in the study process have been identified, each of which contains an affective (motivational) component and a cognitive component (Biggs 1987). The commonly cited approaches to learning are the surface approach and the deep approach (Saljo, 1979, cited in Biggs & Tang, 2011).

The *surface approach* is about the external motivation and surface learning strategies. The student's sole intention in learning is to satisfy the perceived requirements of the teacher or the system, which the student looks at as externally imposed and detached from his interests. In such a situation a student tends to reproduce information he has been given to satisfy the examination requirements of the course (Biggs, 1987; Hativa, 2000; Biggs & Tang, 2011). However, in this approach, a student might even be active, but will learn only to pass examinations. As Trigwell and Prosser (1991) observe, the student may use tactics such as memorising or rote-learning strategies in order to be able to reproduce the material. In this approach, he can easily be conversant with facts during examinations and even pass his examinations very well only to lose such knowledge in a short while. In the opinion of Marton and Saljo (1997, cited in Exeter, Amaratunga, Ratima, Morton, Dickson, Hsu & Jackson, 2010) such a student is a disengaged learner who may settle for taking notes during lectures, memorising facts and important points in order to get the minimum pass-mark. In the development of higher education capabilities such a student would achieve very little.

The *deep approach*, on the other hand, consists of internal motivation and deep learning strategies. It is about making connections and meaning rather than focusing on isolated elements or rote-learning (Butcher *et al.*, 2006; Biggs & Tang 2011). The student takes deliberate steps to internalise the major substance of the subject material presented. He seeks meaning of the subject matter in order to understand it (Trigwell & Prosser, 1991; Biggs & Moore, 1993). Such a student aims at gaining an understanding of the subject matter. He adopts strategies such as reading widely and discussing the concepts or issues with others and seeks to make sense of new knowledge and relate it to what he already knows about this topic and related topics. The student interacts critically with content, examines evidence and evaluates the process through which conclusions have been generated (Biggs 1987; Biggs & Tang, 2011). The major interest is not in high marks or grades but rather to achieve knowledge and skills. In effect, the deep-approach student has "passion for learning with a focus on development of capabilities needed for future practice" (Balasooriya *et al.*, 2009:792). Therefore, deep learning can be equated with successful learning that can form a foundation for further learning, unlike surface learning that is short-term (Butcher *et al.*, 2006). This is because the deep learner is an 'engaged' student "seeking to develop his/her knowledge, reflecting on the facts and details presented in the lecture related to their own experiences and 'the big picture'" (Exeter *et al.*, 2010:762). Indeed, deep approaches to learning tend to have high-quality learning outcomes whereas surface approaches tend to have poor-quality learning outcomes (Trigwell *et al.*, 1999). Students, therefore, need to be encouraged to practice deep learning because it is associated with high-quality learning. And, as Biggs (1999) suggests, this encouragement demands a well-structured knowledge base; an appropriate motivational context; learner activity; and interaction with others. Indeed, it is possible to deliberately create these factors in a learning environment such as at university level.

From the above two learning approaches, the surface approach is apparently the least helpful and points to immaturity on the part of the student. On the other hand, the deep learning approach would be ideal for a university student aiming at acquiring applied knowledge and skills. Therefore, the deep approach, if practised and encouraged, can transform students' lives through knowledge and skills retention.

It appears that learning is also affected by the learning environment. "'Learning environment' refers to the social, psychological, and pedagogical contexts of learning in which learning occurs and which affect students achievement and attitudes" (Fraser, 1998:3). The relationship between the environment and student approaches to learning has been widely discussed in literature (Entwistle & Ramsden, 1983, cited in Trigwell & Prosser, 1991; Otting *et al.*, 2010). When the classroom-level learning environment has elements that promote deep approaches to learning, students are stimulated to adopt deep approaches. However, when the students are placed in learning environments that demand superficial learning, such as recall and memorisation, they are likely to adopt surface approaches to learning (Trigwell *et al.*, 1999; Kek & Huijjer, 2011). Hence, student approaches to learning can, inter alia, be adapted to the environment. Consequently, by improving the learning environment, it is possible to improve on the quality of learning and the learning outcomes. Therefore, the paper, inter alia, analyses the approaches to learning in the light of learning environment at Makerere University.

## 8. The Research Methodology

The paper is based on a case study and investigates learning approaches at Makerere University and higher education capabilities development among first-degree social science students. As Amin (2005) and Newman (2006) recommend, the study used multiple sources of evidence to generate data for analysis. I used qualitative approaches. Qualitative research approaches were used because, as Amin (2005:42) indicates, qualitative research promotes "greater understanding of the way things are, but also why they are the way they are". In this study, the approaches helped to explain the learning approaches used at Makerere University.

Using purposive sampling, three departments from the College of Humanities and Social Sciences were selected. The departments were: Social Work, Sociology, and Political Science. Four lecturers at different levels of seniority in those departments were selected. In addition, five new graduates (2007-2016) from the three departments were selected using both cluster and snowball sampling techniques. The new graduates were the major respondents followed by lecturers from social sciences. Data were collected through interviews with new graduates and lecturers plus document



reviews. The themes of investigation were learning approaches, knowledge and skills (capabilities) development. The major themes of analysis were fused under learning approaches and their effects on higher education capabilities development.

## 9. Learning Methods and Approaches at Makerere University

The findings revealed that learning is done through many ways. Some people learn by doing something or by listening to the spoken word; others learn by reading words, and/or observing a given phenomenon. The learning methods in this section are those ones being applied at faculty of social sciences at Makerere University.

### 9.1 Group Work and Coursework

Students at Makerere University engage in group work. Group work and individual coursework are the most common ways in which Makerere students learn. They form interest groups with class mates and discuss academic matters. For instance, a lecturer reported:

*"If you form them (students) into groups, you can see some of them learn from each other on how to do particular things: how to go about writing a piece of assignment; how to go and ask for a placement for internship. You know, collectively, there is collective learning" (Lecturer in Social Work, LSW1).*

By implication, if used correctly, group work method is beneficial because it enhances the development of some higher education capabilities such as practical reason, and sociality and participation. Learning happens because when the students are in groups the group members learn from one another. However, from new graduates' testimonies, Makerere University employs group work mainly as an assessment method and less as a teaching method meant to foster learning. Actually, one participant reasoned:

*"To the best of knowledge...if you are too many in a class, for instance in OD, where we were over 100 students, if joined into groups he [lecturer] would easily mark in a shorter time. He would mark easily the few scripts..." (New Graduate, NG1).*

In fact, group work is used mainly for the convenience of the lecturer since it reduces the workload

to be assessed by, for example, reducing the number of scripts to be marked. Using group work as an assessment tool in some cases diminishes the would-be learning benefits of this method. In group work, some students engage in free-riding, whereby some group members do not participate in group assignments but only turn up to append their signatures to the work before it is handed in to the lecturer for assessment.

### 9.2 Attending and Listening to Lectures

Students learn by listening in lectures. The interaction between students and the lecturers enhance students' learning. Therefore, students develop their higher education capabilities through lectures. However, there are other students who are only interested in acquiring a degree certificate and actually focus on attaining the bare minimum mark. This phenomenon came up during individual interviews when a participant said:

*"About 30% is of seriously committed students and the other 70% I can call them mediocre. They just come and attend the lectures. By the way, we had a common saying: 'All I need is surviving a retake'. Someone is aiming at 52% or 55% [the bare minimum pass mark] to escape a retake.... There are in mediocrity, 'as long as I pass'; that is what you will find students telling you, 'at university you read only before exams'" (New Graduate, NGSW1).*

Indeed, this revelation seems to imply that some students are simply looking for a qualification regardless of its value. Usually, students receiving a pass mark are those who, in the wisdom of most examiners, have barely internalised the knowledge or skill required by such a course or paper because of their surface approach to learning. Nevertheless, a student graduates. Even as one participant observed:

*"Well, but when we went to the university we thought not much was required of us. They told us that there is a lot of freedom in the university so we thought that going to the university was all about freedom" (New Graduate, NGSW2).*

The students in general seem to be poorly self-motivated. Some of the students behave as if they are too young to follow university education. Therefore, such students end up not developing the requisite higher education capabilities.

### 9.3 Learning Through Internship

Students at Makerere University also learn through internship or fieldwork placements. Internships or fieldwork enable the students to learn directly from the practitioners. Fieldwork includes the attachment of students to social care agencies in the community, schools, government departments and agencies where there is actual work that facilitates learning. In the current study, a participant revealed that:

*"...they (students) go for internship in a recognised institution. And, while there they get first-hand information when they go to societies to learn and then get the experience on what people are going through" (Lecturer in Social Work, LSW1).*

Through such experiences, the students may learn several things, for instance how to lobby for better policies.

### 9.4 Personal Reading as a Learning Method

Students at Makerere University also learn through reading on their own, guided by reading lists supplied to them by lecturers. Lecturers encourage students to use both the library and the internet. These multiple sources of information provide learning opportunities. Indeed, one respondent reported:

*"Actually, in some of the classes we tell them [students] to read in advance, before we go and talk about something... because as a lecturer I give about 35% of what a student should know in that particular course. I only facilitate the learning process for the student. A student is supposed to take his learning seriously and use the library" (Lecturer in Social Work, LSW2).*

Students' motivation to reading is quite often a result of the demands of coursework assignments that are received from lecturers. Students read as individuals and then discuss coursework questions or topics. Personal reading is helpful in understanding of subject matter. But, quite often students read in the last days to an examination thereby engaging in surface learning approaches which deny them the development of permanent knowledge and skills.

### 9.5 Online Learning

Online learning is one of the learning avenues students use. This approach is getting more and more popular at Makerere University. Students access the

internet and download learning materials posted by their lecturers on a university website. These materials could be notes made by the lecturers or relevant articles from different publications. Because of the availability of reading materials on the internet, some students even avoid lectures. As one lecturer revealed:

*"Information technology has just many wonders. ...our lab has internet there. Therefore, most of the time students go in the computer lab when course-work questions are difficult. Some students consult the e-resources, which I think they use to learn more than what we teach" (Lecturer in Political Science, LPS1).*

Students argued that the internet has the learning materials that they need to learn the subject matter. In the process, some students miss out on explanations and illustrations given by the lecturer in class. Quite often, the end result is insufficient knowledge and skills development among students. Therefore, when not properly managed, internet use in learning can disadvantage a student in expanding higher education capabilities.

### 9.6 Discussion Method of Learning

The students also learn a lot from group discussions. They consider discussions to be one of the most effective ways of learning. For instance, a participant said:

*"Learning in discussions is useful because you get to learn a lot in a short time as opposed to reading on your own" (New Graduate, NGPS1).*

Another respondent observed:

*"As a student, specifically what I used to do, I would use revision to internalise what I got from the lecture room. Then from there, it would be group discussions to bring different ideas together to come up with one concrete solution to the problem" (New Graduate, NGS2).*

Group discussions help students in sharing ideas if preceded by intensive private reading. The discussions facilitate the sharing and building of knowledge and skills such as practical reasoning. However, academic discussions with the major objective of learning as opposed to passing examinations or coursework are very rare at Makerere

University. Actually, in interviews nobody reported to have discussed topics for the sake of learning: most new graduates used to discuss for the sake of passing examinations which is a surface approach to learning.

Participants reported that the lecturers who take interest in students' learning give them topics or questions for discussions. Sometimes the lecturers encouraged students to answer questions and make class presentations. Such presentations are very fruitful because they enable students to learn through participation and this enhances the retention of knowledge and skills. Presentations enhance confidence-building and learning disposition. However, the presentations are rarely used at Makerere yet presentation would force students to do deep reflection during preparation. Only one out of six lecturers interviewed reported to have been using the class presentations method.

## 10. Discussion of Learning Approaches at Makerere University

The students at Makerere University quite often pay limited attention to what it takes to acquire the higher education capabilities. To acquire the higher education capabilities, as scholars (e.g. Trigwell & Prosser, 1991; Biggs & Moore, 1993) attest, one needs to use deep learning approaches on a large scale. However, the results suggest that concentration on learning by students at Makerere is low. Students seem to concentrate on their studies only under the threat of impending examinations or tests. Even when they learn, they are engaged only in surface learning approaches which limit their internalisation of knowledge and skills expected at that level.

A lot of constraints to learning could be a result of how lecturers teach. The use of the lecture method, for example, that dominates the teaching processes at Makerere University, accompanied by notes dictated in the lecture room, does not provide sufficient study material. The lecturers dictate the main points and later on expect short answers because the students are very many. The students simply cram these few main points and reproduce them during examinations and tests. Incidentally, the students pass their examinations and coursework with good grades. However, as scholars (such as Biggs, 1987; Trigwell & Prosser, 1991; Hativa, 2000) observe, although such surface learners can reproduce information that they have been given

to satisfy the examination requirements of the course and even pass very well, such knowledge and skills are lost shortly after examinations. Similarly, Makerere University surface approaches to learning seem to limit the development of higher education capabilities among students.

The surface approaches to learning by students at Makerere University seem to be an extended and probably exaggerated part of a wider national 'system' of examination-focused learning. At many stages of the lower education system in Uganda, a lot of interest is focused on examination passing than on knowledge and skills acquisition and retention. Students in secondary schools depend on summarised pamphlets which have both questions and model answers; hence the teaching is examination oriented. Actually, one respondent argued:

*"The learning processes are there and we try them; but the problem is the client group (students). You know, before learning takes place everybody does their bit. Personally at my level as a senior person and a professional social worker I am doing my part, but my students; my goodness! They depend on my sketchy notes" (Lecturer in Social Work, LSW1).*

Indeed, only a few students are academically 'grown-up' and focused students. The majority of the students appear unserious. In such cases, lecturers are disgusted with students' reluctance to study. Actually, some students simply want a degree certificate without going through the rigours of university studies. Students who take little interest in learning or who absent themselves from classes miss out on some of the knowledge and skills they should have acquired from the university.

Some students are interested in receiving limited teaching from their lecturers so as to avoid being examined on many issues. Such students are like what Exeter *et al.* (2010) describe a disengaged learner who is only interested in minimum amount of learning and simply memorises facts and some points in order to get a pass-mark. Actually, in some cases students at Makerere will applaud a lecturer who indicates that he will cancel certain sessions due to other commitments. For example, one respondent mentioned:

*"They (students) even tell you off your head that 'you are giving us too much' ...and they do not read. So however much we are trying as lecturers*

*and professionals, we are faced with clients who are not motivated. And, I think this is why I say we have a lot of immature students who do not know what brought them here" (Lecturer in Sociology, LS1).*

Certainly, some students at Makerere complete university when they have attended only 'bits and pieces' of their course. During assessment of students' work, lecturers find glaring evidence of knowledge and skills deficiencies unexpected of a university student. The deficiencies are partly due to students missing classes on their own volition and partly due to other factors. Such students with surface approaches to learning inevitably disadvantage their higher education capability development opportunities.

Students seeking to transform their education capabilities tend to get involved in deep approaches to learning that quite often demand doing research of whatever kind on their own (Butcher *et al.*, 2006). They take interest in their studies and they are curious to get the knowledge and skills. And, as Jungert and Rosander (2009) attest, students' learning can be enhanced if they become active participants in the learning processes and in the development of the learning atmosphere and not simply as passive recipients. However, as indicated in this sub-section, the learning processes at Makerere University seem to be not well-guided: students are not informed of how to learn. This role of teaching them how to learn appears widely neglected by some University lecturers and the entire university management system. The neglect allows students to avoid their academic responsibility through dodging classes, free-riding in group work and avoiding rigorous research in their relevant disciplines.

## 11. Conclusion

Surface approaches to learning are constraining skills and knowledge development at public universities in Uganda. As already indicated in this paper, students at Makerere University learn through day-to-day personal interaction with lecturers, experts, peers, and through internet surfing as well as private individual reading. All these approaches are useful and help students improve on their higher education capability. However, the students' learning intensity and interest to learn appear to be low. Most students concentrate on learning only when

they are under the threat of examinations or tests. So, when they engage in learning, they use surface approaches. Surface approaches to learning lead to loss of opportunities to acquire higher education capabilities in form of skills and knowledge.

The internet is another source of learning that is used by students for both academic and non-academic purposes. Officially-provided-Internet access is, however, generally low at Makerere University, with an estimated 25% access by the student community (excluding the students in ICT courses). This percentage is quite low for university students in the current age. Besides, students are generally averse to downloading elaborate study materials from the internet, instead opting to use the internet mainly for social interaction, such as on WhatsApp, Twitter and Face book. In spite of the current familiarity with internet purposes, students are less inclined to use it for academic learning. Therefore, the presence of learning technology does not guarantee the usability of such technology even when the user is reasonably versed with it.

## 12. Implications of Learning Approaches for Makerere and Other Universities in Africa

In this paper, I attempted to demonstrate that the learning approaches at Makerere can have an influence on higher education capability development. Where university students concentrate on constructing a personal understanding of ideas, the probability of replicating such ideas in practice after university life is increased and vice versa. Therefore, the universities need to emphasise learning approaches that benefit both the individual student and society. Approaches to be emphasised are those that concentrate on building insights, personal development and transformation of a student. Such learning domains make a student more productive in society. The learning approaches in universities have to be deep in nature and pedagogically sound to enable student's complete university education as useful, knowledgeable and skilled graduates.

Universities in Africa should strengthen their career guidance and counselling functions. In spite of the presence of learning opportunities that facilitate students to develop higher education capabilities (for example internet resources) there



is need for the university faculties to go beyond these opportunities and guide students in how to learn. Students need guidance on what to download, how and why. Hence, the universities should institute functioning career centres that are open to all students for consultations and guidance.

Makerere University and other universities in Africa should develop analytical skills of students. These skills will enable the student to measure up to international standards regarding what is expected of a graduate. In order to improve on the analytical skills of the students, universities in Africa should promote deep learning approaches among their students. Moreover, as some scholars have argued, deep learning helps students to always make connections and meaning rather than focusing on isolated elements of knowledge or rote-learning (Butcher *et al.*, 2006: 89). In effect, the students will graduate from the university, when they have developed the expected education capabilities.

Makerere University and other universities in Africa need to strengthen computer skills development among students. The level of computer skills development among non-specialist students of Computer Science or Information Technology is low. While, most faculties at universities have computer laboratories that allow students to do self-teaching, the numbers of computer need to be sufficient to match the student population. Besides, university students need to be advised on what needs to be surfed and what needs to be ignored given that the internet has a plethora of information most of which is non-academic and is usually of low value to a university student. In conclusion, the foregoing recommendations are made with the belief that they are feasible. However, I am also aware that making changes in the university system is a complicated undertaking. Quite often the different stakeholders are reluctant to change their way of doing things due to one reason or the other. Nevertheless, as long as what needs to be changed in a university is beneficial to most of the stakeholders (such as students, lecturers, and employers) the university should effect such a change. In effect, the opportunities for students to expand their higher education capabilities will be enhanced through the suggested refinements in student learning approaches and the problems identified in the first sections of this paper will hopefully be minimised.

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