



Perceived Impacts of Higher Learning Institutions to the Local Community - Iringa Municipality - Tanzania

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Abstract

This study is an attempt to examine the perceived socio-economic impacts of higher learning institutions to the local community in Iringa municipality, Tanzania. A cross sectional research design with quantitative and qualitative methods was employed to 180 people aged 18 years and above. Interviews, focus group discussion, documentary review and field observation were used in data collection. Descriptive statistics including frequencies and percentages were used to analyze quantitative data while content analysis was used to analyze qualitative data. Results indicate that, there exist both positive and negative impacts of the existence of higher learning institutions to the local community. Among the positive impacts includes, high money circulation due to increase in population and mobility, increase in the stock of skilled human capital, increase in formal employment, consolidation and establishment of new investments and reduction in abject poverty. However, negatively, the Universities have triggered high costs of living in terms of commodity prices, high rental bills, family disintegration, increase in street children and high spread of HIV/AIDS. It is concluded that, higher learning institutions have greater contributions to the individual and community development. It is recommended that, education on the importance of these institutions and their effects to the indigenous needs to be provided. This has to go hand in hand with the provision of entrepreneurship skills and soft loans from the financial institutions to the local community to help establish and maintain their businesses.

Keywords: Tanzania; higher learning institutions; impacts; local community.

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1. Introduction

Higher learning institutions are seen by the society as critical mechanism for individual advancement and an important driver of the nation's economic development [1, 2, 3]. Seen within the light of this critical role they are endowed, there is a growing awareness worldwide that, these institutions are far from achieving their intended goals. They can impact on a society in a very wide range of ways. Economically, increasing attention is being paid to its contribution to the stock of educated human workforce, vital to individual and nation's future economic growth [1, 2, 4]. Institutions of higher learning also enhances the technological base in the area they are located in the sense that industry operations locate nearby receive a unique transfer of knowledge from the institutions' research effects [1, 5]. Apart from that they act as a source of employment to the local community thus, increases money circulation (ibid). This is possible from the spending associated with operation of the academic institutions. For instance, tuition revenues become income for staffs who in turn build or buy housing, food and clothing and monies spend directly by the students in that area [2].

Moreover, Institutions of higher learning enhances intergenerational economic mobility [4]. The ability of children to move up and down the economic ladder independent of their parents' status become high when children have higher education (ibid). According to the study done by the [4] in U.S.A indicate that, without a college degree, children born in the lowest income quintile have 45% chance of remaining in the bottom quintile as adults. With college degree they have less than 20% chance of staying in the bottom". Moreover, there is extensive verification that higher education raises earnings [6, 7]. Individuals with a bachelor's degree earn more and are less likely to be unemployed than those with only a high school education (ibid). Besides, University graduates pay high taxes because of their high earnings and they have higher levels of consumption which benefits producers and sellers in the market [1, 8]. Socially, universities trigger cultural change to the indigenous ways of living through day to day interaction as people from various places both within and outside the country come to live and stay either shortly or permanently in the place where the University is situated [9, 10].

Like other developing countries, Tanzania requires a highly skilled workforce to meet the demands of today's increasingly competitive, global economy [2, 4]. In answer to this demand, the government has established and allowed the inaugural of both public and private universities all over the country where the education is provided through a complex public-private market, with many different types of individuals and institutions participating. This has led to mushrooming universities in the country leading to high students' enrollment rates (Table 1) shows both public and private institutions as compared to the previous time [11].

The increasing students' enrollment to the higher education institutions in Tanzania has also been triggered by the government support of higher education by expanding income-based payment for student loans through cost sharing and paying salaries and other benefits to the public higher learning staffs [11]. From the few former Universities existed in the previous ten years, notably, the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM) based in Dar es Salaam, Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA) and Mzumbe University (MU) both based in Morogoro [12] today, higher learning institutions are almost in every zone [11] with Iringa Municipal being the leading by having many Universities in Tanzania. The municipal is having five Universities to mention; University of

Iringa formerly known as Tumaini University-Iringa University College(TU-IUCo) being the first private University to be launched, Mkwawa University College(MUCE), The Open University of Tanzania(OUT), Ruaha University College(RUCo) and Moshi University College of Cooperative and Business Studies (MUCCoBS).

Table 1: University Enrollment Trends the share of Public and Private Institutions

Enrollment	Years						
	2003/2004	2004/2005	2005/2006	2006/2007	2007/2008	2008/2009	2009/2010
Public	28,729 (93.4%)	33,903 (92.6%)	35,453 (88.4%)	38,806 (80.6%)	63,649 (79.6%)	74,003 (76.1%)	82,789 (71.8%)
Private	2,030 (6.6%)	2,709 (7.4%)	4,652 (11.6%)	9,341 (19.4%)	16,312 (20.4%)	23,242 (23.9%)	32,516 (28.2%)
Total	30,759	36,612	40,105	48,147	79,961	97,245	115,305

Source: Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher Education, (2010).

While the higher learning institutions are increasing in the Iringa municipal, the population is also increasing, so do people mobility [13]. This has led to changing system of production and consumption as compared to the previous ten years. In addition, there is physical evidence that peoples’ livelihoods are changing and costs of living are highly augmenting day after a day as compared to previous time. However, the causes to these changes are equivocal. This study therefore, intends to examine the socio-economic impacts of higher education institutions to the local community in Iringa municipal. The article focuses on describing people’s perceptions on the presence of higher learning institutions in the study area, exploring the situation of Iringa Municipal before and after the existence of these institutions and lastly point out challenges that are associated with the emergence of higher learning institutions in the study area.

2. Methodology

2.1 Description of the Study Area

Iringa Municipal is one among the four districts of Iringa region. Other districts are Kilolo, Iringa Rural and Mufindi. The Municipal extends between latitude 7° 45’ and 7° 50’ south of the equator and longitude 35° 40’ and 35° 45’ east. The Municipal covers an area of 162 square kilometers with 14 wards and 162 streets varying in size significantly.

2.2 Research Design and Sampling Procedures

This study employed a cross sectional research design. The design was used on the grounds that, it allows the

collection of data from different groups of respondents at a time. Both purposive and simple random sampling techniques were employed to select the study areas and sample size. Purposive sampling was used to select both the district and wards for study where Iringa Municipal with its wards of Kihesa and Mkwawa were chosen for study. The studied wards were purposively sampled because of the fact that each ward has a University located in it. Kihesa ward has Iringa University College (IUCo) a private University while Mkwawa ward has Mkwawa University College (MUCE) a public University. Also, the two wards differed in terms of location thus; it was of importance to know if the impacts vary from one place to another.

A total of 180 households were selected from the two wards, approximately 5.6% of the total households. According to authors in [15] five percent of the study population can suffice a sample under a certain circumstances. To get proportional sample of each village, 5.6% of the total households were taken. The exercise resulted to a sample of 100 households in Kihesa and 80 households in Mkwawa, thus making a total of 180 households. Thereafter in-depth interviews were held with 16 respondents who served as key informants namely two house renters, two catering service providers, two janitors and two stationary owners (one from each institution). Moreover, eight respondents', two shop owners and two salon owners, two minibus drivers "daladala" and two motorcycles drivers "bodaboda", formed a focus group discussion.

2.3 Data Collection Methods, Analysis and Presentation

The study involved both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods including interviews, focus group discussion, documentary review and field observations. Semi-structured questionnaires were administered to households' heads with age 30 years and above. The age 30 years was chosen as a starting point because many people in that ages especially in towns have a means to get his /her survive.

Conversely, focus group discussion and field observation were used to collect qualitative data. Focus Group Discussions were conducted to eight selected respondents both males and females. The purpose was to get general information on the contribution of higher learning institutions in their area. Field observation was used to cross check the given information and other behaviours related to the existence of these institutions in the area. Furthermore, descriptive statistics including frequencies, percentages and mean were carried out with the help of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 16.0) and Microsoft Excel 2003). Content analysis was employed in analyzing qualitative data collected through key informants interviews and FGD.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Demographic Profile of the Respondents

As indicated in Table 2, more than 90% of the respondents were between ages 35 and above and only 5% of them were between ages 30 and 34. Based on the ages of the respondents (30 years and above), they were mature enough to give analysis and changes that have occurred before and after the inaugural of these institutions in their area. In terms of sex, 57% were females and the rest 43% were males.

Table2: Respondents characteristics included in the survey

Characteristic	Frequency (N= 180)	Percentage (%)
Age groups		
30-34	09	05
35- 39	69	38
40-44	38	15
45-49	50	34
50 and above	14	08
Sex composition		
Male	78	43
Female	102	57
Marital status		
Single	36	20
Married	110	61
Widowed	18	10
Divorced	16	09
Education level		
None	13	07
Primary	97	54
Secondary	53	29
Tertiary	17	10
Occupations		

Students	21	12
Employed	34	19
Self employed	85	47
Unemployed	40	22

Moreover, 61% of the studied population was married at the time of survey and 20% were single. Education wise, 54% had completed primary education while 29% had completed secondary education. Occupation wise, more than 50% of the respondents were employed either self or formal against 22% who were unemployed.

3.2 Peoples' Perceptions on the Existence of Higher Learning Institutions

Results in Table 3 show that 98.3% of the studied population were aware of the existence of higher education institutions in their area and were able to identify at least three institutions at hand. However, the commonly and most frequently mentioned institutions by respondents in rank of order were Tumbaini University currently known as University of Iringa (UoI) where, (97.5%) of the population claim to know it, Mkwawa University College of Education (MUCE) came the second having being known by 89.3% of the population and Ruaha University College (RUCo) was known to (82%) of the population.

Table 3: Perception on the Existence of Higher Learning Institutions (N =180)

Variables	Yes (%)	No (%)
Peoples' understanding on the existence of higher learning institutions	98.3	1.7
<i>Known Universities by the people</i>		
Tumbaini University/University of Iringa (UoI)	97.5	2.5
Mkwawa University College of Education (MUCE)	89.3	10.7
Ruaha University College (RUCo)	82.0	18.0
Open University of Tanzania (OUT)	23.6	76.4
Moshi University College of Cooperative and Business Studies (MUCCoBS)	17.8	82.2

The Open University of Tanzania (OUT) and (MUCCoBS) were less mentioned and known by few 23.6% and 17.8% of the population respectively. This is due to the fact that the two Universities have few students and their contributions to the community are least felt by the majority as compared to the former three mentioned Universities.

3.3 Situation before the existence of higher education institutions

As indicated in Table 4, the lives of the people in the study area before Universities come into sight was not that good. This is substantiated by 84.4% of the respondents who said that the level of poverty before the inaugural of higher learning institutions in their area was alarming due to low earnings. The major livelihood determinant was agriculture with few community members relying on petty business [13]. Therefore, large numbers of the community members were unable to have all basic needs.

Moreover, 72.2% of the surveyed population articulated that money circulation was very low before the existence of these institutions due to low people mobility. The author in [14] noted similar observation that regions with no Universities in South Africa record low level of development due to low movement of people and money circulation. As it has been stipulated earlier, before the establishment of higher learning institutions in the study area, large population depended on peri-urban agriculture which affected their earnings. Higher dependence on agriculture with minimal market for agricultural products leads to low earnings hence low money circulation.

Table 4: Situation before higher learning institutions (N= 180)

Statement	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)
Few employment opportunities	07.3	3.3	89.4
Low peoples' earnings	18.4	2.2	84.4
Low savings and investments	15.5	5.2	79.3
Very low Money circulation	17.1	6.7	76.2
Reduction of abject poverty	68.5	4.1	27.4

The above results was also revealed by respondents during the FGD that;

“The situation here in our place before higher learning institutions was really bad. One could have a business but no buyers. There were few people, low money circulation and many of us relayed on farming activities. Also, the level of poverty among the people was extremely high. This triggered an influx number of people particularly; youths both girls and boys to vacated the place to other regions in search of jobs” (A male

respondent aged 42 years old, during FGD).

Moreover, 89.4% of the population revealed that unemployment to all genres of the population was high. Formal employment was on public institutions which employed workers with at least certificate level of education. This implies that, majority of the employees in these institutions were from outside the region. Existence of few institutions limited majority of the indigenous to be employed due to low education levels (primary or none primary education).

Furthermore, 79.3% of the studied population pronounced low savings and investments as one of the salient feature in that time. This is because people had low earnings thus unable to save. The majority produced for subsistence and not for investment. Similar observation was noted in South Africa [14]. The remaining 68.5% of population remarked on the low costs of living. Respondents argued that, before the establishment of higher learning institutions, house rents were low and commodity prices were also low. Low living costs was associated to large numbers of the community members being engaged in agriculture thus more food staffs were available at low prices. Moreover, even the population was not so much high thus food prices and house rents were low due to high competition for customers.

3.4 Situation after the establishment of higher learning institutions

Results Table 5 exposes that 86.4% of the population reported on the increase in both formal and self employment leading to increase in human capital. Among those who said institutions have led to high employment opportunities, 21.1% reported to be employed in these institutions as janitors, gardeners, masons, security officers and watchmen. These findings are in line with the previous studies [4, 7].

Moreover, 82% of the studied population reported on the increase in money circulation due to high peoples' mobility and the increase of employment opportunities. Currently, due to higher learning institutions, there is high movement of people all over the region. More food products are transported from rural areas to urban centers in order to cater the existing population; likewise, more products are transported to rural areas. This has resulted to the consolidation and establishment of new investments thus increase personal earnings.

Not only that but also 78% of the targeted population acknowledged on the reduction in poverty because people have diversified their livelihood strategies by engaging in petty business. Author in [10] noted similar findings in Britain. More than 42.3% of the respondents reported to have started businesses around the Universities such as shops, beauty and hair salons, food vendors, house renting, stationeries, internet cafes, bar and groceries services. Others have been employed themselves in transportation through motorcycles and town buses. Similar observations were noted by authors in [8, 16, 17].

The role of higher learning institutions on the proliferation of business was also raised by key informants during the FGD where respondents emphasized on the establishment and consolidation of more petty business centers in the study area as seen in the quotations;

“Our businesses are being run under the expense of presence of the universities since most customers are students. In the absence of the students, especially, during their vacation, our business performance is greatly affected to the extent that many people tend to close businesses till Universities are opened” (A female respondent with primary education, aged 32 years old, at Mkwawa during the FGD).

Table 5: Situation after higher learning institutions (N= 180)

Statement	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)
Employment opportunities have increased	9.2	4.4	86.4
High money circulation	13.0	5.0	82.0
Institutions have raised peoples’ earnings	18.4	3.6	78.0
HEIs have increased skilled workforce	22.3	6.2	71.5
HEIs have increased saving and investments	29.6	2.4	68.0

The same scenario was reported by respondents at Kihesa during the interview that;

“The main customers of our business are students. If you come during the holidays you will find most of the stationeries and groceries closed. During this time sales become low and sometime one can go back home with an empty hand” (A female respondent with primary Education aged 39 at Semtema during the interview).

Therefore, from universities spending and that of students and their families, friends and visitors from outside increase purchase and make local community raises their earnings making savings and reinvestment inevitable. This has generally improved people’s living conditions and majorities are able to have basic needs than before.

3.7 Problems associated with the existence of HEIs to the community

With the introduction of HEIs, majority (99.4%) of the studied population in Table 6 reveals commodity prices to have become exorbitant. Example, a kilo of rice grown by indigenous farmers within the area is now sold TSH. 1700 up to 2000/= from TSH. 180 up to 360/= in 2005 when Universities were not there. Moreover, 89.7% of the studied population indicates on the increase of rental bills for houses per room that have mounted from TSH. 3,000 up to 8000/= in 2005 to TSH. 30,000/= and above in recent years hence become a challenge for low income earners.

Apart from that, 68% of the respondents revealed on the increase in extra marital relations that has triggered high spread of sexual transmitted diseases such including HIV/AIDS pandemic. Existence of many new comers has increased social interactions among the indigenous and newcomers. Generally, male college students and staffs tend to run after the indigenous girls and women owing being cheap while men out of the college

particularly business men both married and unmarried run after the college students and staffs as well. This has resulted to the increase in the spread of HIV making Iringa to be the top third region with high number of new infected people at national level.

Furthermore, 51.2% of the respondents reported on the increase in street children in the area. As it has been stipulated earlier, existence of higher learning institutions has contributed to the emergence of love affairs between newcomers and indigenous that has resulted to unplanned pregnancies. This forces young girls and their parents to have greater burden of taking care children who have no fathers. Due to low earnings, large number of these children ends up in streets without proper care of both parents. Author in [10] noted similar observation. Not only that but also, family disintegration was reported by 50.5% of the respondents who claimed to be associated with high interaction between community members, University students and staffs as well. New love affairs particularly to those who were in bonds have resulted to high mis-understandings among partners of which some have contributed to either partial or full separation.

Table 6: Problems associated with the higher learning institutions to the community (N=180)

Problem	Yes (%)	No (%)
Rise of commodity prices	99.4	0.6
High rental bills	89.7	10.3
Spread of sexual diseases i.e. HIV/AIDS	68.0	32.0
Increase of streets children	51.2	48.8
High family disintegration	50.5	49.5

4. Conclusion

The purpose of this paper has been to find out the perceived socio-economic impacts of Universities to the local community in Iringa Municipal Tanzania. Results indicate that, with the introduction of Universities in the Municipal, the lives of the people have greatly changed. Peoples' livelihood strategies have improved from farm to none- farms, increased chances of both formal and self employment, increase in skilled human capital, high money circulation, consolidation and establishment of new investments hence as well as reduction in poverty. However, negatively, the universities have triggered high commodity prices, house rentals' bills, family disintegration, increase in the spread of HIV/AIDS and street children. It is concluded that, despite having negative impacts, higher learning institutions have greater contributions to the individual and community development. It is therefore recommended that, education on the importance of these institutions to the indigenous needs to be provided. This has to go hand in hand with the provision of entrepreneurship skills and soft loans from the financial institutions to the local community to help establish and maintain their businesses

hence, the reduction in the poverty.

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