

# CHARACTERISING ENTRANTS INTO THE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM IN UGANDA

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**CONFERENCE THEME: BEST PRACTICES IN EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT FOR REGIONAL INTEGRATION**

**Sub-Theme: Educational Assessment and Regional Quality Assurance Issues**

## **Abstract**

*The Inter-University Council of East Africa, together with the National Higher Education Quality Assurance bodies of the East African countries, has been developing a joint quality assurance framework for Higher Education in the region. Among the objectives of this framework is improved student mobility, as well as bridging the gap between disparate educational systems. A key quality concern for Ugandan Higher Education is the validity of the scores from the high stakes Advanced Level examinations, upon which Universities largely base their admission.*

*The study that I will report on is part of a wider PhD study investigating the predictive validity of the A-Level scores of entrants' success at University. I will focus on the preliminary study that seeks to characterise the University entrant in terms of their knowledge and skill base as reflected by their A-Level subject combinations and grades. The study was carried out at two public and six private universities in Uganda, and focused on three study programmes: Development Studies, Information Technology and Business Administration.*

*The major outcome of this study is to identify the subjects that University entrants study at A-Level, and their scores in the final examination. This will form a basis for the follow-up study to determine the predictive validity of entry scores with relation to performance at University; this validity is expected to be variable, and my thesis is that it will depend greatly on the specific teaching and examination practices at the entrants' previous high schools; the follow-up study will focus on these schools.*

## **1.0 Introduction**

### **1.1 Quality of Higher Education**

While it is widely acknowledged that Primary and Secondary Education is fundamental to shaping a literate and productive labour force, it is increasingly apparent that a quality higher education is essential to creating more sustainable, longer term growth within the Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) region, as well as narrowing the gap between the SSA and other regions (World Bank, 2008 (a)). However, given that primary and secondary education serves the purpose of preparing students for higher education, the quality of the two is intimately linked so dealing with one necessarily requires dealing with the other. As such, in the specific context of East African Regional Integration and Higher Educational quality, a pertinent quality indicator is the particular characteristics (knowledge, skills, etc.) of entrants into the various universities in the region.

### **1.2 Examinations and Educational Outcomes**

Taking a closer look at the quality and relevance of secondary education as it relates to higher education reveals the fact that it is clearly linked to examination and assessment practices. Students will direct their energies within the learning process towards the knowledge and skills necessary to enable them to score as highly on the final examinations as possible. Teachers, Schools and Parents, for themselves, are not immune from this influence as they all derive credit from examination success. In Uganda, the fierce competition for limited places at the Public and Private Universities within the country has further magnified the role that examinations play in the teaching and learning process in pre-university education. From the view point of higher education quality, therefore, it is necessary to focus attention on the specific way in which this interaction prepares (or fails to prepare) students for Higher Education.

An indication that things are not as they should be is the results of national and international assessments at both primary and secondary level which have shown that actual achievement is generally in the lowest knowledge levels. For instance, the National Assessments of Progress in Education (NAPE 1999, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2010) report that achievement for grade 3 and grade 6 students of primary school in mathematics and language has generally been on the decline since the introduction of Universal Primary Education in 1996. NAPE studies carried out at Secondary School level show a similar trend in Mathematics, Biology and Language for students in the second year of secondary school. As is to be expected, the shortcomings at lower levels of education extend to higher levels, leading to a “spiral build-up of learning matter” (pp. xii, World Bank, 2008(b)), which means learning material from lower levels has to be repeated at the higher levels, which in turn leads to less time on the material for those higher levels. The implications for Higher Education are clear.

### 1.3 Match between Pre–University and University Curricula

One of the stated objectives of Primary and Secondary schooling in Uganda is to prepare students for Higher Education (Government White Paper, 1992). However, as a result of a high influx of students through the Universal Primary Education (UPE) and Universal Secondary Education (USE), the whole system is under great stress; the physical infrastructure and human resources cannot keep up. This influx is also at odds with a curriculum originally designed to filter out the most academically fit to create an administrative and managerial elite. With its many subjects and examination hurdles, it has not kept pace with the emerging fields of knowledge and attendant pedagogies, nor does it address the current needs of either the students entering it, or the needs of the country at large (CURASSE<sup>1</sup> Draft Report, 2007). It is true that there have been attempts at reform in the primary education sector, with initiatives like introducing a thematic curriculum that better reflects the needs of students and local communities, but implementation is still a problem (Altinyelken, 2010).

Universities, on the other hand, have been much more responsive to the changes within their environment, as evidenced by the changes in pedagogy, the study programmes on offer and their international outlook. However, they still depend almost wholly on the examination grades of students in the high school leaving national examinations to carry out their entry selections; the question here is: what knowledge and skills are reflected by the scores in these examinations, and is this what is needed to successfully take on university education? Certainly, as far as quality of higher education goes, the universities themselves are not without short comings; some of their curricula are not well matched to National needs, and some teaching methodology is out–dated. Nevertheless, Universities perceive that students entering University have low levels of requisite knowledge and skills, and that this contributes greatly to the eventual quality of graduates.

### 1.4 Teaching to the Test

To access higher education, students must overcome the hurdles presented by national examinations at various stages of the educational system. Given that there are proportionately fewer and fewer places in higher levels of education the national examinations have become higher stakes than ever before. With teachers under pressure to prepare students for the national examinations *and* complete the syllabus, it is no wonder that they end up concentrating only on the topics that are expected on the final examination. This “teaching to the test” leads to an emphasis on learning strategies, on the part of students, that lend themselves best to passing examinations such as memorisation and rote learning (Kellaghan & Greaney, 2004), learning strategies that do not lend themselves to success in higher education.

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<sup>1</sup> CURASSE: Uganda Secondary Education & Training Curriculum, Assessment & Examination – Roadmap for Reform

## **2.0 Investigating the Effect of Teaching and Assessment Practices in Pre-University Education on Entrants into the University System in Uganda**

### **2.1 Background of Study**

There is widespread concern about the quality and relevance of University graduates in Uganda, both within and without the University sector. Not much, however, is documented about the extent of this problem. At one interuniversity workshop held at Uganda Martyrs University in December 2004 to discuss this phenomenon, educators from various Universities perceived the problem as consisting of the following facets (among others):

- i) Infrastructure (lecture halls, laboratory space, equipment, library, ICT, etc.)
- ii) Curriculum (design, regularity of review, relevance, etc.)
- iii) Academic Staff (teaching skills, disciplinary/professional skills, motivation, etc.)
- iv) Students (attitudes, learning strategies, previous education, etc.)

(C. Nshemereirwe, 2005)

A major recommendation from this workshop was a call for more research into the nature of these facets so as to find viable solutions to the quality issue. As a participant at this workshop, and through my experience as a University educator since then, I was drawn to investigate the oft repeated claim that Universities are limited in what they can do with entrants who lack the necessary fundamental knowledge and skills (facet iv). This, participants felt, was a direct result of the high emphasis on passing examinations in pre-university education, which then produced high school graduates ill-prepared to take on university study.

### **2.2 The Problem**

Although Universities in Uganda recognise the possible effect of “teaching to the test” on the scores of students in the national examinations, most of them still rely on these scores for entry selection. It is still perceived as the simplest and most straightforward way to select entrants from a large number of applicants, and implicitly assumes that the students with higher scores are more suited for the university studies. However, there is no evidence to support this assumption, hence the need for this study. One way to test this assumption is to compare University entry grades to interim and exit grades, and this study sets out to do that.

### **2.3 Preliminary Study**

Before embarking upon this study, however, it was found that very little information existed on the population of interest: entrants into the university; as such, it was necessary to carry out a preliminary study to characterise this population. The purpose of this paper is to report on this study.

### **3.0 Entrants into the University System**

#### **3.1 University Education in Uganda**

There has been an unprecedented growth within the Ugandan University Education sector in the past two decades: from one public University in the late 1980s to almost thirty today. Of these, only twelve have received full accreditation to date: five Public and eight Private<sup>2</sup> universities. Makerere University, Kampala (MUK) is the oldest and largest University, and as a public University receives the bulk of government scholarships; as such, MUK has the most competitive entry requirements, and therefore receives among the best performers in high school leaving examinations (Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education (UACE)).

Due to the economic difficulties facing the country throughout the 1980s, the Government cut some of the funding to higher education, and in order to survive MUK introduced the “Private Sponsorship Scheme” in 1992. Through this scheme, students not eligible for government funding could apply separately and pay for their own tuition and board. At first, these students could only enrol in specially designed programmes, but later they could also enrol in the regular programmes and study alongside the government sponsored students. This development led to an explosion in student population at MUK: between 1993 and 1999, for instance, undergraduate enrolments at MUK more than quadrupled, with 80% of the 10,000 new students being fee-paying at the end of this period (Musisi & Muwanga, 2003). The same period also saw the establishment of various private universities, and by 2005 there were almost 70,000 students enrolled at various Universities around the country.

#### **3.2 Admission to University**

The minimum requirement for admission to university in Uganda is two principle passes obtained in any subjects at the same sitting. A principle pass is a score of between A and E, and students typically attempt examinations in three or four subjects.

##### *3.2.1 Admission to Public Universities*

Admission to all public university and non-university tertiary institutes is carried out through the Joint Admission Board (JAB). The JAB publishes information on the requirements to enter the various programmes on offer, and lists so-called “essential” and “desirable” UACE subjects for admission to each university study programme. Prior to sitting the UACE examinations, all registered candidates are then required to apply to the public tertiary institutions of their choice. During the admission process, the scores in the various examination subjects receive either weighting of 3,2,1 or 0.5, depending on their “relevance”. Performance at the lower secondary school Uganda Certificate of Education (UCE) examinations is also considered.

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<sup>2</sup> There are two categories of private universities: faith based not-for-profit, and for-profit universities

### 3.2.2 Admission to Private Universities

As opposed to application to programmes at public Universities, applications to programmes offered at the Private Universities are often received *after* the applicants have received their UACE examination results. Entry requirements at most of these Universities are usually less stringent, and in many cases applicants are admitted to the study programme of their choice independent of the subjects they attempted at the UACE examinations. Some consideration of UCE performance is also made here.

### 3.3 The Study Population

For the purposes of this study, information on entrants into the University system was sought from the twelve chartered public and private universities. To ease comparison, it was decided to limit the study population to entrants into the following three study programmes: Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA), Bachelor of Development Studies (BDS) and Bachelor of Information Technology (BIT). Limiting the study to these programs presented two advantages: they are offered at almost all Universities, *and* they provided a balance between social, business and technical studies.

Of the 12 chartered universities contacted, information was obtained from the Registry Departments of eight. Of the four remaining ones, Busitema University did not offer the programmes selected, Gulu University and the Islamic University in Uganda were contacted rather late and the information could not be obtained, and the Uganda Christian University declined to participate. The main information sought about entrants was the following:

- a) Subjects done and scores obtained in the UACE Examinations
- b) Students' former schools
- c) Split by University Study Programs into which they were admitted

The Universities in the study are listed in table 1 below:

	<b>University</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Established</b>
1	Makerere University, Kampala (MUK)	Public	1922
2	Mbarara University of Science & Technology (MUST)	Public	1989
3	Uganda Martyrs University Nkozi (UMU)	Private (Catholic)	1992
4	Nkumba University (NU)	Private (for - profit)	1996
5	Bugema University (BU)	Private (7 <sup>th</sup> Day Adventist)	1997
6	Ndejje University (NJU)	Private (Anglican)	1999
7	Kampala International University (KIU)	Private (for - profit)	2002
8	Kyambogo University (KYU)	Public	2002

**Table 1: Universities in Study (Additional source: Uganda National Council for Education (NCHE))**

### 3.4 Methodology

Permission to access the registry data on admitted students was sought by writing letters to the Deputy Vice Chancellor, Academic Affairs of each of the selected Universities. The purpose to which the data was to be put was explained, and an undertaking made to uphold the necessary ethical standards. Once permission was granted, a visit was made to the Registry department of each University to determine the form in which the data was stored so as to decide a on strategy for retrieving it. At three of the universities, the data was not available in digital form so research assistants had to manually convert the data from the student paper files into digital form. All the other Universities had the data in digital form, although to varying degrees of completeness.

Where available, data was collected for up to five academic years, i.e. from the 2006/2007 academic year to the 2010/2011 academic year. The data from all the Universities was then merged and an analysis carried out to determine the following:

- a) The secondary schools contributing the highest number of entrants
- b) The subjects done by the students admitted into the three programmes
- c) The best performed out of those subjects.

As earlier mentioned, the Uganda Government only awards scholarships to students admitted to public universities, and apart from a few awarded on a quota system to students from less advantaged areas, the bulk are awarded to the best performing students country-wide. With regard to fee-paying students, public universities also get their pick because they perceived as being of better quality. This was considered in the analysis so as to detect the differences, if any, between these groups of students.

### 3.5 Results

#### 3.5.1 Sampled Students

##### **Universities Visited**

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No. of universities sampled: 8 (3 public, 5 private)

Total no. of students sampled: 14,031

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##### **Former Secondary Schools Represented in Sample**

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Total no. of unique former schools in sample: 981 (out of approximately 1,220 secondary schools in the country)

No. of former schools contributing at least 40 students each: 90 (approximately 11%)

Total no. of students from top 90 schools: 6,989 (49.8%  $\approx$  50%)

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### Study Programmes Sampled

1. Bachelor of Development Studies (BDS)
2. Bachelor of Information Technology (BIT)
3. Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA)

**TABLE 2: SPREAD OF STUDENTS OVER STUDY PROGRAMMES IN SAMPLED UNIVERSITIES**

University	No. of academic years sampled	BDS	BIT	BBA	TOTAL
BU	4	117	0	255	<b>372</b>
KIU	5	851	1062	1301	<b>3214</b>
KYU	2	351	177	105	<b>633</b>
MUK	5	865	1754	3234	<b>5853</b>
MUST	3	249	579	633	<b>1461</b>
NJU	3	131	84	326	<b>541</b>
NU	2	294	147	328	<b>769</b>
UMU	5	320	415	453	<b>1188</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>3178</b>	<b>4218</b>	<b>6635</b>	<b>14031</b>

**NOTE:** As expected, the biggest number of students is enrolled in BBA, and it is in fact a very popular study program.

**TABLE 3: DISTRIBUTION OF STUDENTS FROM TOP 90 FORMER SCHOOLS**

Students from individual school	No. of Schools	No. Of Students	% of TOTAL *
40-59	39	1889	<b>27%</b>
60-79	25	1706	<b>24.5%</b>
80-99	12	1066	<b>15%</b>
100-149	8	971	<b>14%</b>
>150	6	1357	<b>19.5%</b>

\* N=6989

**NOTE:** Just six secondary schools contribute almost 20% of all students in the sample.



### 3.5.2 TOP SUBJECTS DONE PER STUDY PROGRAMME

In order to determine the knowledge and skills students bring with them to the different study programmes at the different universities, an analysis was carried out to find out the subjects most commonly taken by the students sampled. Students typically attempt examinations in combinations of three or four subjects at a single examination sitting.

**TABLE 4: GOVERNMENT SPONSORED STUDENTS (All enrolled at MUK)**

	BBA (N=278)			BDS (No. 321)			BIT (No. 194)		
	Subject	No. of Students	% of N	Subject	No. of Students	% of N	Subject	No. Of Students	% of N
1	ECO	278	100%	ECO	313	98%	ECO	191	98%
2	GEO	161	58%	HIS	299	93%	HIS	188	97%
3	MAT	158	57%	CRE	237	74%	CRE	142	73%
4	HIS	118	42%	GEO	218	68%	GEO	88	45%
5	ENT	105	38%	ENT	91	28%	LIT	53	27%

ECO: Economics

MAT: Mathematics

HIS: History

GEO: Geography

ENT: Entrepreneurship

LIT: Literature

CRE: Christian Religious Education

ART: Fine Art

**TABLE 5: FEE-PAYING STUDENTS AT PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES**

	BBA (N=3553)			BDS (No. 1102)			BIT (No. 2240)		
	Subject	No. of Students	% of N	Subject	No. of Students	% of N	Subject	No. Of Students	% of N
1	ECO	3538	100%	ECO	1069	97%	ECO	1922	86%
2	HIS	2600	73%	HIS	1011	92%	HIS	1583	71%
3	GEO	2102	59%	CRE	769	70%	CRE	1173	52%
4	CRE	1903	54%	GEO	657	60%	ART	610	27%
5	ENT	1030	29%	LIT	220	20%	MAT	409	18%

**TABLE 6: STUDENTS AT PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES**

	BBA (N = 2380)			BDS (N=1437)			BIT (N=1595)		
	Subject	No. of Students	% of N	Subject	No. of Students	% of N	Subject	No. Of Students	% of N
1	ECO	2376	100%	ECO	1306	91%	ECO	1353	85%
2	HIS	1620	68%	HIS	1202	84%	HIS	972	61%
3	GEO	1423	60%	CRE	1017	71%	GEO	801	50%
4	CRE	1207	51%	GEO	866	60%	ART	769	48%
5	ART	715	30%	ART	579	40%	CRE	670	42%

## Discussion

Irrespective of University or University study programme, Economics appeared at the top of every list, while History and Geography appeared on every top five list. This may be the result of Economics usually being listed as an essential subject among the requirements for these programmes. Additionally, since students who attempt four subjects increase their chances of being selected, there is a tendency to take religion, one of the local/international languages or Fine Art as a fourth subject. Perhaps as a result of this practice, Art made it into the top five lists. Further, Fine Art is inexplicably listed as an essential subject for BIT in the manual issued by the Joint Admissions Board (JAB) for Public Universities, and therefore a score there receives the maximum weighting of 3. Finally, it is worth noting that although the university programmes represent a spread across social, business and technical studies, the subjects done by the majority of entrants are quite similar, and science subjects are particularly scarce.

### 3.5.3 BEST PERFORMED SUBJECTS AT UACE

Every year, the Uganda National Examination Board (UNEB) issues a report analysing the overall performance of students in the various subjects examined at the UACE level. The most recent report available is that for UACE examinations sat at the end of the year 2009, and compares performance in that year with performance in 2008. Table 2 shows the comparison for the most common subjects within the sample, and it is interesting to see that three of the most popular subjects, Economics, Mathematics, and Entrepreneurship, have some of the lowest pass rates overall (in fact only Biology registers a worse performance). It is also interesting to see that when you compare the percentage of students who score between A-E and A-O, the proportion of students who score "O" is also quite high.

In terms of popularity, the students in the sample reflect what is in the wider population: Economics, History and Geography are also the most popular subjects attempted.

SUBJECT	2008 UACE (N=89,921)					2009 UACE (N=98,217)				
	Total Students		A*	A - E*	A-O*	Total Students		A*	A-E*	A- O*
	No.	%	(%)	(%)	%	No.	%	(%)	(%)	%
Fine Art	26,398	29.36	0.8	84.1	99.8	26,524	27.01	1.7	88.3	99.9
CRE	33,815	37.61	3.2	68.7	96.4	39,227	39.94	3.8	71.0	95.9
Geography	43,806	48.72	0.5	32.5	85.0	45,357	46.18	2.2	52.4	92.3
Lit. in English	5,450	6.06	3.0	63.9	93.2	5,357	5.45	3.1	62.5	91.3
History	52,235	58.09	8.2	65.8	88.2	60,843	61.95	7.7	66.9	90.5
Economics	67,953	75.57	2.2	44.8	72.9	73,596	74.93	3.8	45.8	72.8
Mathematics	16,097	17.90	3.9	38.9	63.3	21,180	21.56	7.7	50.0	72.4
Entrepreneurship	29,217	32.49	0.3	29.3	68.2	45,252	46.07	2.2	35.1	67.2

*\*Possible exam scores are A, B, C, D, E, O, and F; 'A' being the highest and 'F' being a fail*

**Table 7: Comparison of UACE examination performance – 2008/2009 (Source UNEB)**

### 3.5.4 PERFORMANCE BY STUDENTS ADMITTED TO UNIVERSITY

The practice at many Universities is to convert the letter grades into a numeral so as to apply weights to pre-determined essential and desirable subjects and so determine a cut-off point. As such, All scores of 'A' are given a value of '6', 'B' is given a value of '5', 'C' = '4', 'D' = '3', 'E' = '2', 'O' = '1' and 'F', naturally, gets a value of '0'. Calculated in a similar way, the average scores of students within the sample in the various subjects done in the UACE examinations were obtained, and the five best performed subjects are reported in Tables 8–10. Also reported is the proportion of students that score at least a 'C' in each of these best done subjects. (Only subjects with at least 40 students are represented).

**TABLE 8: GOVERNMENT SPONSORED STUDENTS AT MUK**

Subject	N	Mean	S.D	A-C %	A-E %
Islamic Religious Educ.	41	5.61	0.70	100.00	
Luganda	55	5.13	1.19	92.70	96.40
History	605	5.04	1.17	88.80	98.20
Christian Religious Educ.	454	4.66	1.26	81.10	98.70
Entrepreneurship	228	4.52	1.60	79.40	91.70
Economics	782	4.43	1.49	75.40	93.40

**TABLE 9: FEE-PAYING STUDENTS AT PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES**

Subject	N	Mean	S.D	A-C %	A-E %
Islamic Religious Educ.	334	4,87	1,02	89.2	100.00
Kiswahili	524	4,76	0,86	93.3	99.40
History	5194	4,60	1,17	84.6	97.40
Luganda	294	4,59	1,04	85.4	99.00
Christian Religious Educ.	3881	4,37	1,06	81.1	98.60
Fine Art	1540	4.06	0.99	73.90	98.60

**TABLE 10: STUDENTS AT PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES**

Subject	N	Mean	S.D	A-C %	A-E %
Islamic Religious Educ.	142	3,32	1,57	48.60	82.40
French	68	3,28	1,41	48.50	86.80
Fine Art	2063	3,15	1,13	41.10	91.10
History	3792	3,12	1,48	42.00	80.90
Luganda	152	3,07	1,36	41.4	82.20

## **Discussion:**

The best performed subjects overall show a significant tendency to local languages, religious studies and Fine Art, raising the question of how useful knowledge and skills in these as best done subjects is to the programmes in which students are enrolled. Conversely, Economics, the most popular subject for students enrolled in all the programmes, only appears at the very bottom of the best performed subjects list for government sponsored students, and not at all on the other two top five lists. Given that over 90% of all students in the sample do this subject at the UACE, and given that it is listed as an “essential” subject for both BBA and BIT, this low performance is worth noting.

The other thing that is evident is that the mean scores in the best performed subjects are highest for the students enrolled at MUK under Government Sponsorship, and lowest for students enrolled at Private Universities. Additionally, it is interesting to note that four out of the five best performed subjects are also the most popular subjects for Government sponsored students, meaning that these Government sponsored students do well on the subjects that they do choose. Conversely, only two out of the five most popular subjects for the fee-paying students at public universities, and just one for those at private universities, appear on the lists of the best performed subjects. This means that fee paying students, on the whole, do not perform that well on the subjects that they do choose; no wonder their overall mean scores are also lower.

Finally, the analysis shows that there is a difference in mean performance on the same subject within the three groups. Table 11 shows an analysis of the difference in mean scores on History for the three groups.

		95% Confidence Interval				
		Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
G	FP	0.435	0.056	0.000	0.30	0.57
	PU	1.923	0.057	0.000	1.78	2.06
FP	GU	0.435	0.056	0.000	0.57	0.30
	PU	1.488	0.028	0.000	1.42	1.56
PU	G	1.923	0.057	0.000	2.06	1.78
	FP	1.488	0.028	0.000	1.56	1.42

*G= Government Sponsored at Public Universities; FP = Fee Paying at Public Universities;  
PU = Students at Private University*

***Table 11: Difference between mean scores of Government sponsored students, fee paying students and students at Private Universities.***

## **4.0 CONCLUSION**

### **4.1.1 OVERVIEW OF STUDY RESULTS**

The aim of this preliminary study was to build up a picture of the student who enters Universities in Uganda. Data was collected from eight of the twelve chartered public and private universities in the Business Administration, Information Technology and Development Studies study programmes. Data was collected on cohorts of entrants for at least two, and up to five academic years, including 2010/2011. An attempt was made to take samples from all chartered universities in the country but due to logistical difficulties no data was obtained from the three universities located in the East and North of the country, while one other university declined to participate.

On the whole, it was found that most students in the sampled study programmes do Arts subjects at the UACE examinations, which is also reflected in the wider population of examinees at the UACE. Further, it was found that the scores in these subjects, differed significantly, with students attending the public Universities on scholarship scoring highest, then fee paying students at public Universities, and finally students at private universities. It was also found that about half of the students within the were from just over 10% of secondary schools represented in the entire sample. Of this 50%, almost 20% came just from six schools, representing 10% of the entire sample.

### **4.1.2 FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS**

The preliminary study reported here is part of a larger study, and has motivated the pursuit of the following goals:

- a) Are the scores in the National Examinations (still) valid as a basis to select students for University study in Uganda
- b) Investigate the belief that secondary schools that are most successful in sending students to University are also more likely to “teach to the test”
- c) Test the hypothesis that: students who score low on “teaching to the test” have higher 1st year GPA and CGPA scores at university than those who score high on “teaching to the test”

The findings from this initial study have helped build up a picture of the entrant into University in Uganda, and will enable the design of this study to proceed. The findings have also motivated a closer look at the particular knowledge and skills gained through the most popular subjects, and their relevance to the programmes into which students are enrolled. A match of the two curricula will be an interesting dimension to the study.

The overarching aim of this entire study is that by establishing the characteristics of entrants into the University system, the issue of Higher Education quality can be addressed in a more focussed and informed manner.

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