University of Groningen

Motivations for participation in higher education

Tumuheki, Peace Buhwamatsiko; Zeelen, Jacobus; Openjuru, George L.

Published in:
International Journal of Lifelong Education

DOI:
10.1080/02601370.2016.1165745

IMPORTANT NOTE: You are advised to consult the publisher's version (publisher's PDF) if you wish to cite from it. Please check the document version below.

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Publication date:
2016

Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database

Citation for published version (APA):
Tumuheki, P. B., Zeelen, J., & Openjuru, G. L. (2016). Motivations for participation in higher education: Narratives of non-traditional students at Makerere University in Uganda, InternationalJournal of Lifelong Education. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, *35*(1), 102-117. https://doi.org/10.1080/02601370.2016.1165745

Copyright
Other than for strictly personal use, it is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

The publication may also be distributed here under the terms of Article 25fa of the Dutch Copyright Act, indicated by the "Taverne" license. More information can be found on the University of Groningen website: https://www.rug.nl/library/open-access/self-archiving-pure/taverne-amendment.

Take-down policy
If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Downloaded from the University of Groningen/UMCG research database (Pure): http://www.rug.nl/research/portal. For technical reasons the number of authors shown on this cover page is limited to 10 maximum.

Download date: 14-04-2022

International Journal of Lifelong Education

ISSN: 0260-1370 (Print) 1464-519X (Online) Journal homepage: http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/tled20

Motivations for participation in higher education: narratives of non-traditional students at Makerere University in Uganda

Peace Buhwamatsiko Tumuheki, Jacques Zeelen & George Ladaah Openjuru

To cite this article: Peace Buhwamatsiko Tumuheki, Jacques Zeelen & George Ladaah Openjuru (2016) Motivations for participation in higher education: narratives of non-traditional students at Makerere University in Uganda, International Journal of Lifelong Education, 35:1, 102-117, DOI: 10.1080/02601370.2016.1165745

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/02601370.2016.1165745

Published online: 28 Mar 2016.

Submit your article to this journal

Article views: 223

View related articles

View Crossmark data

Full Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at
http://www.tandfonline.com/action/journalInformation?journalCode=tled20

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF LIFELONG EDUCATION, 2016
VOL. 35, NO. 1, 102–117
http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02601370.2016.1165745

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Motivations for participation in higher education: narratives of non-traditional students at Makerere University in Uganda

Peace Buhwamatsiko Tumuheki[a], Jacques Zeelen[b] and George Ladaah Openjuru[c]

[a]Department of the Academic Registrar, Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda; [b]Globalisation Studies Groningen, University of Groningen, Groningen, The Netherlands; [c]Gulu University, Gulu, Uganda

ABSTRACT

The objective of this qualitative study was to establish motivations for participation of non-traditional students (NTS) in university education. The findings are drawn from empirical data collected from 15 unstructured in-depth interviews with NTS of the School of Computing and Informatics Technology at Makerere University, and analysed with the aid of qualitative data analysis software ATLAS.ti. Three major findings were established: (1) motivations were found to be multiple, multifaceted and varied for each individual; (2) the sociocultural context of the African society including societal perceptions of university education were found to be the major factor shaping motivations of NTS to upgrade their educational qualifications; and (3) most motivations were found to be extrinsic in nature rather than intrinsic and based more on push rather than pull factors. Yet, although the demand for university education is increasing, life beyond university can no longer guarantee some of the anticipated rewards such as employment and its related benefits. It therefore becomes important that the purpose of education within universities in Africa is directed towards achieving development of the whole human being. In this way, a graduate's capacity to function will not be seen only in the economic and professional life, but also in other spheres of life.

KEYWORDS

Extrinsic motivations; socio-cultural context; non-traditional students; university education; capabilities

Introduction

There are two types of motivations generally agreed upon in literature on motivation – intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Swain & Hammond, 2011). McGivney (1996) as quoted in Swain and Hammond (2011) describes intrinsic motivation as 'the enjoyment the individual gets from performing an activity or the subjective interest the individual has in the subject' (p. 594). On the other hand, extrinsic motivation relates to the notion of utility value of the task and therefore is instrumental and related to the expected subsequent reward (Swain & Hammond, 2011).

CONTACT Peace Buhwamatsiko Tumuheki ptumuheki@acadreg.mak.ac.ug, p.tumuheki@gmail.com

© 2016 Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group

The constant changes in technology and scientific progress in contemporary society have created an unstable job environment (Jarvis, 2007), and as work becomes more flexible, it equally becomes extremely difficult for a person to visualize a career path (Meijers & Wijers, 1998). Also, increasingly individuals have a responsibility for their own learning and employment and to do this successfully, they do not only have to become more flexible (Jarvis, 2007) but more importantly they have to develop a career identity, i.e. they must be able to develop a meaningful connection between education, work and biography (Meijers & Wijers, 1998). To do so, individuals have to develop their self-concepts and biographies with which they can find and shape their roles in society. Consequently, academic qualifications such as degrees have become a major currency on the labour market with anticipation that those individuals with more education and better qualifications stand better chances of getting jobs (Jarvis, 2007).

Kasworm (2003) argues that although a good number of studies cite career reasons as the key enrolment goal, each adult learner enrols 'with a complex set of beliefs, internal demands and external pressures' (p. 5). He categorized motivators for adult students into three—motivators that are a result of: life transitions (personal transitions and changes); proactive planning to create a different future life (planned scheduling); and both life transitions and proactive planning (mixed motivators). Other motivations include personal development and interest, being role models for children (Wainwright & Marandet, 2010); life events—some past, present or future changes (Gallacher, Crossan, Field, & Merrill, 2002); and family and community support (Mudhovozi, 2014).

In this article, we seek to understand the reasons non-traditional students are motivated to upgrade their education to university degree, especially so from the developing context. Subsequently, a contextual lens within which to understand student motivations and the purpose of university education in development from the African context is important.

The African context on motivations for and the purpose of higher education

In the African communities, extrinsic and intrinsic motivations can respectively be seen through the inner eye of '*We*' and '*I*'. To this end, the term extrinsic has meaning that goes beyond the anticipated rewards such as money as it is also embedded within the sociocultural context of the African society. In this context, choices of individuals are so much related to choices of the collective (Preece, 2013). 'There is nothing like learning by and for self' (Lekoko & Modise, 2011, 15). Consequently, the impact of sociocultural factors such as kinship, (extended) family, gender and age on an individual's life in Africa cannot be underestimated (Mbiti, 1975, 1990). This is because in Africa, a person never existed as an individual entity but as part of a whole (Lekoko & Modise, 2011), as illustrated by such African beliefs as 'I am because we are and since we are therefore I am' (Mbiti, 1975, p. 108). And because an individual does not exist alone, (s)he is expected to play a role in the interdependence of existence where both individuals and communities have obligations to one another, including the dead and the yet-to-be-born (Mbiti, 1990). This strand of thought is so strong that some African scholars, e.g. Lekoko and Modise (2011) have come to distinguish the usage of the notions We and I when referring to the self, with emphasis that the 'We' concept is best suited for the African context and the 'I' concept to the Western context where an individual is viewed as a separate entity (Preece, 2013).

From the institutional perspective, the post-independence motivations of an African university have centred largely on contributing to nation building (Preece, Ntseane, Modise, & Osborne, 2012), which mission saw the emergence of a developmental university in Africa (Sawyerr, 2004), where universities were perceived to be a major part of the post-colonial development project. In this era, higher education was a public good, and it's funding fundamentally the responsibility of the state. Finding employment by graduates was quite straightforward because of the existing gaps left in civil service by the colonialists (Teferra & Altbachl, 2004). This motivation or mission was realized in the first two decades after independence (Preece et al., 2012), after which a market-oriented university took centre stage, turning higher education into a private good. The market has since had an upper hand in shaping the mission, purpose and organization of higher education in Africa so much so that some universities have turned into vocational institutes (Mamdani, 2007).

In Uganda, the higher education sector is largely controlled by the market in terms of both ownership and funding (National Council for Higher Education [NCHE], 2013). At 73%, the private sector takes the largest share of ownership of higher education institutions leaving out only 27% to the public sector. In terms of funding, tuition from privately sponsored students is the major source of income especially at universities. This is quite a disadvantage to the sector as it hampers infrastructural development, which is important in accommodating the increasing student enrolments. Although universities take only 18% of the higher education share, nevertheless, they take lead in student enrolments because they are the most popular institutions of higher learning. In 2012/2013 academic year, university students constituted 70% of all students enrolled in tertiary institutions. 66% were enrolled in humanities and 34% in science and technology disciplines.

There are three main avenues of entry to university education in Uganda: direct; mature age; and diploma (Government of Uganda [GoU], 2008). In this study, non-traditional students (NTS) are those undergraduate degree students who:

(a) either did not obtain the standard high school certificate or obtained it but did not have continuous transition from upper secondary (high school) education to university education; and
(b) gained access to university education through either diploma or mature age entry schemes.

In consideration of (a) and (b) above, some of these students have in addition to study, other major life obligations such as work, family and community commitments, which constrain the time they have at their disposal for study.

Methodology

The data used in this paper are part of a larger qualitative narrative-based study being conducted at Makerere University, aiming at understanding the participation experiences and lived realities of NTS in university education in Uganda, and finding ways to address their educational exclusion through recommending appropriate interventions. In consideration of the participatory action research approach (Creswell, 2012) used in this study, it was important to choose a unit of focus from which to draw the participants with whom to research. The School of Computing and Informatics Technology (CIT) was chosen because it was from the experiences of the researcher in this very unit as the Faculty Registrar that the motivation for this research was inspired.

This paper draws from narratives of 15 unstructured in-depth interviews (Riessman, 2008) administered between March and July 2013 to three cohorts of NTS in CIT: five currently enrolled students; seven graduates; and three dropouts. All interviewees selected for the currently enrolled cohort were finalists on their respective undergraduate degree programmes. Finalists were considered to be information rich (Creswell, 2012) since they had been at the university for longer periods than their counterparts in other years. The selection of these interviewees was purposively made (Hennink et al., 2011) based on their personal profiles shared with the researcher during one-on-one meetings held to seek their consent for participation in the research. The selection of interviewees from the graduates' category was also purposively made after interacting with them at the ground-breaking stakeholders' workshop held in March 2013. This interaction made it possible to identify information-rich participants for the in-depth interviews, through personal profiles shared during the introduction session of the workshop. For the dropouts category (students who enrolled but did not complete their studies), they were quite a hard group to reach, as even those who would be reached through telephone would not show interest to participate. However, through well-established rapport (Hennink et al., 2011) with currently enrolled students, it became possible to eventually reach the study participants in the category of dropouts.

The decision to include the 2005/06 admission cohort (graduates) on Bachelor of Science in Computer Science and Bachelor of Information Technology was done because this cohort was the last to be admitted through the mature age entry scheme (although the scheme is still applicable in other units of the university). We also wanted to learn the coping strategies they deployed to successfully complete their studies. On the other hand, the inclusion of dropouts was done so that we obtain a complete picture of the lived realities of NTS by having an insight into what could be contributing to their dropping out and possible delayed completions (Table 1).

All interviews were conducted in English and lasted between 60 and 90 min. Although the interviewees are categorized as finalist, graduate and drop-out, this categorization was not used in the analysis for this paper since our major focus was on understanding their motivations for university education, which is in the past for all categories. The categorization was only meant to show the details of the interviewees at the time of the interview. The rest of the interviewees profiles indicated in the table above, are as at the time of their respective enrolments in the university.

Since we intended to explore the individual stories of NTS' lived realities, our selection of the participants did not aim at achieving representativeness of the sample but at the 'richness of the data' (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005, p. 49). At the start of each interview, the interviewer took time to introduce in depth the subject of inquiry to the interviewee, after which the interview took an open-ended, flexible format guided by topical questions that were relevant to the research question. This was done with a consciousness that being NTS might give rise to bad feelings (Kasworm, 2005) which might lead the interviewees to avoid sharing some of their lived realities and experiences in the story line. Since 'people's lives and experiences are narratively messy' (Owens, 2006, 1176), interviewees were probed and intentionally encouraged to be as open as possible and narrate with ease their stories in full—including their difficult experiences, without straining to think through how their conversations fit into the subject of inquiry or nursing feelings that some elements of their story were wrong to speak of. This approach allowed social interaction, i.e. gave freedom

Table 1. Participants' profiles.

Name	Age	Sex	Status	Work	Sponsor	Entry	Cohort	Course
Naome	26	F	Single	Petty trader	Government	Diploma	Finalist	BIT
Dativa	24	F	Single mother	Petty trader	Parents	Diploma	Finalist	BIT
Albert	30	M	Married	Taxi conductor	Brother	Diploma	Finalist	BIS
Jackie	24	F	Single	None	Parents	Diploma	Finalist	CSC
Stewart	23	M	Single	Electrician	Grandmother	Diploma	Finalist	SWE
Donald	23	M	Single	IT Intern	Self	Diploma	Graduate	BIT
Esther	32	F	Married	Secretary	Self	Diploma	Graduate	BIT
Silver	40	M	Married	Secretary	Self	Diploma	Graduate	BIT
Edgar	23	M	Single	Driver	Self	Diploma	Graduate	BIT
Joshua	29	M	Single	IT Technician*	Government	Mature	Graduate	CSC
Vianne	25	M	Single	Firefighter/Diver	Self	Mature	Graduate	CSC
Julie	34	F	Married	Data Entrant*	Husband	Diploma	Graduate	CSC
Cathy	26	F	Single	None	Priest	Diploma	Dropout	BIS
Alon	23	M	Single	Marketer	Self/Father	Diploma	Dropout	BIS
Deo	23	M	Single	Data Entrant	Parents	Diploma	Dropout	BIT

Note: All participants' names are pseudonyms. *resigned at enrolment.

of speech and created a safe conversational space (Owens, 2006) that encouraged the interviewees to open up 'unknowingly'—and to tell more than they consciously would have told the interviewer, thereby revealing new insights and important information.

Interviews were recorded verbatim and transcribed from the voice recorder into text shortly after each interview. Data analysis was done with the aid of qualitative data analysis software ATLAS.ti (Flick, 2009). As a means of data validation, a validation workshop was held in May 2014 at which the preliminary findings were presented to the research stakeholders for verification. In this paper, we focus our attention to the question about NTS' motives for university education. To illustrate their voices, we use excerpts from the interviews.

Findings—motivations for university education

We categorize our findings largely into two broad categories; intrinsic and extrinsic motivations (Swain & Hammond, 2011). The intrinsic motivations were those motivations exclusive to and from within the individual, to which no external rewards were attached (intrinsic individual motivations); whereas extrinsic motivations were those motivations linked to the sociocultural context of the participants and from which external rewards were expected. These were both at the individual level (individual extrinsic motivations) and also external to the individual (non-individual extrinsic motivations).

Individual intrinsic motivations

These were motivations that arose out of an individual's inner desire for personal growth, i.e. wanting to learn for the sake of learning or gaining knowledge in the area of interest. These intrinsic motivations were found connected to the study choices of the participants, and were reported by only two interviewees.

Both Donald and Joshua were motivated to enrol at university because of the passion and desire they had to expand their knowledge in Information Technology and Computer Science, respectively. Donald had always had passion for IT since his secondary school days. Not performing well enough at high school to gain a government scholarship at university

led him to enrol for a diploma in IT which he believes defined the path to his dream. Because of his passion for IT, he excelled at the diploma, which earned him an internship placement in the same institution. This experience enhanced his desire to know more about IT leading him to enrol for a Bachelor's degree:

> …right from school I had a passion with IT but I did not know how, the route to reach there, so that defined my path, just positioned me… I still remember I was the only one who was given internship yet I was not a bachelor's student… I was always curious and I was always there to help so that's how. (Donald)

Joshua, on the other hand, developed an interest in computers during his diploma studies in another discipline. Upon completion, he pursued his interest by studying a certificate course in computer maintenance and repair with which he obtained employment in different IT companies. The challenges he encountered in his work raised further his curiosity and desire to gain more knowledge in computer viruses and anti-virus software leading him to sit the mature age entry examinations for the Bachelor of Science in Computer Science.

In this study, we found that the intrinsically motivated, like other participants, also had extrinsic motivations that pointed to some kind of reward, whether decided directly by themselves or indirectly by others such as family members or the larger sociocultural context of the African society. Indeed, a common thread through the various narratives of the interviewees was the motivations derived from their sociocultural environment.

Non-individual extrinsic motivations

These were motivations external to the individual, i.e. motivations derived from the individual's social environment with external rewards attached to them for and by the society to which the individual belonged. Consequently, the sociocultural environment from which learners come prior to joining university was found to be an important element in understanding the choices they make, and how and why they make them.

Societal perceptions of university education were found to be one of the major factors that shape motivations of NTS to upgrade. Right from the colonial days, the education system in Uganda has been structured in the form of a linear progression such that for society to consider one successful in education, he or she must have completed the education cycle signalled by obtaining the 'prestigious' university degree (Tukundane, Zeelen, Minnaert, & Kanyandago, 2014). Not obtaining the degree renders one to feel and be seen as a failure with no value and respect in society. So, in a bid to satisfy the perceptions and expectations of society, NTS sought out educational upgrading opportunities. For instance, Vianne narrated that given his excellent performance at primary seven, getting a degree was the expected ending; 'I felt I had an obligation to tell them I went far, I didn't end at A [Advanced] level; yes that's what they expected and I have it'.

Consequently, NTS motivations to go back to study were found to be highly linked to goals of social mobility and obtaining status in society (Minnis, 2006). For instance, Naome said that one of the reasons she went to university was 'I also wanted to take that status of having a degree, at least reaching a degree level'. Stewart anticipated that obtaining a degree would place him among the 'learned' and earn him respect in society. For Alon, he wanted to be equally valued in society 'for the degree, I wanted to be someone whereby…I can also come out of the public and stand… somebody who could be valuable as others who could have what, gone to university'. Sometimes the motivation was just because everybody else

was going to university as Alon shared 'basically we do things because people are doing' and [not because that's what one necessarily wants to do or to be].

Due to this societal pressure, NTS tended to place or weigh themselves against others be it their siblings or other relatives and friends with whom others in society compared them:

> … my main motivation is looking at, let me tell the truth and nothing but the truth. First of [all], I first looked at people who are dying and I said for everyone who is dying they read your background, your study; so and so stopped in P7 [primary seven], I say *ahha* (yes) that one I have passed, this one stopped in S4 [secondary four], that one I passed, now you are in a group you have friends some are literate some are illiterate some are in the middle and then you say where are you? (Julie)

This desire to fit and belong propelled NTS to upgrade their education so as to be like their contemporaries within their families and/or the larger society. This they believed would help them fit better and not be the odd men out as Alon shared 'I didn't want to just sit down at home since my elders were educated and my guardians were educated and I was the only boy at home'.

For others, the societal pressure pushed their desire to go beyond being at par with their contemporaries to wanting to be better by pursuing further studies after the first degree:

> … the families we come from, I mean none of us wants to be looked at as a failure…I had a big brother, he was through, he had just finished Economics, I was like it cannot be me to lag behind… the family I come from, most people are studied I should say, even my age mates, my cousins; they are progressing. It's a great thing to note that X is now done with degree and is performed well and is now trying to pursue further studies. (Donald)

From the above illustrations, it is evident that the sociocultural beliefs related to gender and the education level of one's family members including those from the extended family played a role in motivating NTS to obtain a university degree. However, it was not only coming from a family of educated people that pushed NTS to upgrade. Also coming from families where siblings and parents had no or had low-level education was a motivation for participation. For instance, Stewart was motivated to upgrade because he did not want to be like his elder siblings who were not living 'a good life' because they 'were not qualified':

> … like in my family, me being the last born, my elders didn't go far I would look at that as a challenge, I am like no! And what they are going through actually, it's not what I would love to experience … I needed to study and perhaps make a change. (Stewart)

Related to education background was the economic situation of the families from which NTS came and the considerable role it played in motivating NTS to go to university, i.e. to say they became motivated to obtain university education so that they could uplift themselves and probably their families from poverty. Donald for instance narrated that partly his motivation was derived from the fact that his widowed mother was neither educated nor doing well (financially) which motivated him to join a university to break the potential vicious cycle of poverty in the family:

> I come from a family that is, my mother was not well off, yeah I was like no I can be something, I have to be somebody yeah I have to be somebody… I wanted to be a better person in the future so I said no I have to do something about it. (Donald)

Like Donald, many other participants were from poor socio-economic backgrounds. Some indeed had had to endure hardships in their previous education levels such as having to repeat classes several times due to lack of fees. This problem of poverty explains why although some of them went to university when they already had their own families, they

still remained linked to their extended (parents) families for support in one way or another. Of the 15 interviewees, six were from single parent-headed families (4 female headed and 2 male headed), one was an orphan raised by his extended family, and the remaining eight had both parents living. However, some of these parents did not have sufficient incomes to cater for their children' needs forcing them to seek for support from relatives, friends and charity organizations.

Nevertheless, this is not to say that things were always smooth for those participants from well-to-do families. For instance Albert's motivation partly derived from the mistreatment he received from his rich father who refused to pay his tuition at university, forcing him to drop out the first time he enrolled but re-joined 10 years later through the support of his elder brother. His father not only refused to pay for his tuition, but always despised and belittled him in public on grounds that he was studying when he was mature and wasting time in school rather than finding something that would make him a better person. He felt motivated to continue to study and rather than giving up he states that he is motivated to complete university so as to prove to his father his worth and earn respect from him.

Accordingly, another aspect of the sociocultural environment that was reported by the students is the role of the (extended) family especially that of parents in influencing NTS' decisions to go to university. The NTS' desire to fulfil their parents' wishes for them to obtain education was perceived as an obligation of obedience and service towards them (Mbiti, 1975) even amidst other possible alternatives to education, such as marriage. For instance, Stewart was motivated to follow his late mother's advice to achieve highly in education since this would enable him as a disabled person to have higher chances of becoming a non-manual worker. For Esther, although both parents lived, their very poor economic status forced her father to ask a relative to register her as an orphan in one of the charity organizations. However, due to very unbearable conditions at the guardian's home, Esther ended up choosing marriage over schooling but this decision always made her feel guilty and haunted her for not fulfilling her father's wish. Eventually this family influence pushed her to go back to school:

> My father wanted me to study when I got married…he would say my child I have nothing to give you, but you study, so when I got married I saw I had made a problem, I didn't satisfy my dad, I kept it at heart, it was bothering me a lot, actually that thing is the one that drove me to go back to school. (Esther)

On the contrary, Dativa, a single mother of one went to pursue a degree because her efforts of getting married to the father of her son had been frustrated by her parents who already had planned that she should pursue a degree after her diploma:

> When I completed diploma I was like let me, I thought actually I was going to get married but then my parents were like 'no, you people you can't get married' [then] my parents were like, 'at least since you are not going to be able to get married, at least you go and what, and complete the degree' because it was already their plan that at least I complete a degree. (Dativa)

And like Dativa, Jackie's parents also planned that she must continue with the degree after completing her diploma probably because they felt that is what was right for her. On her part, she did it because it was what her father wanted her to do:

> My dad really really wanted me to do a degree right from when I was still doing a diploma; he said if you're thinking of stopping here, you have to go back and do a degree, so I knew he really wanted it. (Jackie)

For Julie, she did it simply because her husband asked her to in fulfilment of the commitment he made before marrying her. For Albert, he did it because having been disappointed by his father he did not want to disappoint his elder brother who had stepped in to support his education. For Stewart, he did it because no one in his family had taken on his late grandfather's profession and since the grand aunt was willing to pay his fees, he felt he should be the one to do it. Stewart's narrative shows that the dead are not dead (Mbiti, 1990) and that family-derived extrinsic motivations can also impact on the choice of study.

Still, as part of sociocultural influence, providing good care, ensuring a better future and setting a good example for one's own children whether born or yet to be born was found to be part of the NTS motivation experiences for university education. For instance, Donald shared '…even at that age I would think of my future, what would my kids think of me, what can I put before my kids?' However, role modelling as a motivation was not only for one's children, but also for siblings and other relatives. This was especially so for those individuals who were the 'first in family' to attend university. For them, going to university was because they wanted to motivate those whose lives would be impacted upon by their own achievements. For instance, Naome, a first born in a female-headed family of four, felt that she owed her siblings hard work and achievement to inspire them:

> I wanted to motivate others; the public, my relatives, my sisters, I would become an example to them that since our sister is doing this and this lets also at least struggle hard; because now, my young sister—she is in second year. (Naome)

From the extrinsic point of view, we now evolve into motivations that played at individual level.

Individual extrinsic motivations

These were motivations that individuals held because of the rewards anticipated to be gained from university education whether for individual or society gain, or induced by society perceptions of university education including perceptions and practices of employers.

NTS were motivated to go to university due to the rewards associated with obtaining a university degree, such as qualifying for career advancement and (better) employment opportunities. This was the case for Joshua who thought 'I would get a better job, a well-paying job'. His motivation and perception of the extrinsic advantages of a university education were shared by others, e.g.

> … the only way I would get employment that would pay me something after me telling you how I worked down in those shops, and you know I saw people with papers going ahead, so I am like let me at least also own a degree may be I will work in some people's offices as a learned person. (Naome)

> …if you want a good paying job… office jobs, white collar jobs as [in] good paying jobs, so I said I cannot go out there without a paper…. So that was my main motivation; having my papers to compete with the rest. (Julie)

The motivation perceptions held by Joshua, Naome and Julie are embedded in the belief that obtaining a degree is more or less a guarantee to finding employment, more so for white-collar jobs (Teferra & Altbachl, 2004). This perception was a lived reality for some participants who already held other qualifications such as a diploma but had failed to obtain jobs using those qualifications. For such participants, they were motivated to obtain a degree so as to increase their chances of finding employment since they had had unfavourable

experiences in accessing the labour market using their diplomas. Dativa explained that her failure to obtain a job using her diploma was something to do with the way the diploma qualification was perceived and its holders despised in the labour market and the larger society 'they just take you as if you are too ordinary, you get it, so they could always be like we want degree holders we want degree holders'. Like Dativa, Jackie also became motivated to go for the degree because she found it a challenge to gain employment using her diploma qualification:

> I came and did it [diploma] and graduated in 2011, so during that time after graduation I was home, I tried to look for a job but you could go to people and they say minimum we need is a degree, minimum we need is a degree, so I felt I needed to do a degree. (Jackie)

Nevertheless, Dativa and Jackie's experiences were not shared by everyone. Other participants like Deo, Edgar, Esther, Vianne and Julie had gained employment using their prior qualifications at certificate and diploma levels. For these NTS, their motivations had more to do with the desire to obtain a better qualification (degree) that could enable them to advance in their careers and enjoy better benefits at their workplaces such as promotions that would probably come with salary increments and other work-related privileges. In the excerpts below, we share in part the motivation story of Edgar (a certificate holder at the time) on how he became a degree holder:

> You know this increment of 5%, so one time they increased salary I think it was around 2001 they increased the salary by 5%, now all people who were getting more money all their salaries were doubling ours …
>
> So because it was doubling ours I looked at my salary I was almost, my increment was 5000 [UGX] (about $2). I remember then ehh I went to the personnel, I asked him the reason why they increase more money to people who already have money and for us they give us nothing…
>
> He laughed at me and said '*temwasoma*'; that you did not study, 'you go back to school get a degree like others, you will see; you will come here and they increase the salary'…
>
> I sat down and I calculated and said by the way if I am [to] go to the university how many years do I require? I said I needed 8 years for me to finish…
>
> So I said ehh, I calculated the money I would be paid in eight years even if they had given it all to me without removing expenses whether rent and everything and they said this is your eight years payment, it was nothing. I said that's useless, I said now how will I study? So what I did I said may be God will help me, then I said let me start with O level [ordinary secondary]'. (Edgar)

To conclude Edgar's story, he completed university in eight years as planned, got promoted at his workplace, got a salary increment and now also owns an IT company that employs 50 people. While Edgar's motivation was based on the desire to earn a salary increment, for Deo, he was motivated because he was offered an opportunity for promotion and free hands-on training at his work place, but lost out on this opportunity just because he did not have a degree:

> My huge motivation came from, because there came in an instance where we were working on these land titles, automating them and I had a perfect opportunity of becoming a system admin or an assistant system admin, …the employer first came to me and was like 'Deo can you do this, can you do support, can you help out this' and I was like yeah and… after revising my papers he realised I had a diploma, so I ended up just doing minimal work when it came to technical support. So I had a friend he was also told the same thing, better off my friend had a Bachelor's. (Deo)

Both stories of Edgar and Deo have something in common. Their experiences of being denied salary increments and promotion due to the lack of a degree gave each of them a new perspective and prompted them to begin to view a university degree education as a necessity. But for Edgar, after being laughed at because he was not considered to be a 'studied' person, he went a step further to plan and strategize in a more purposeful and proactive manner for an even greater future and a new life choice of self-employment (Kasworm, 2003). Although self-employment is portrayed as an outcome in Edgar's story it should be noted that it was also part of his motivations to go to university, especially the desire to move from a position where he was controlled by others to where he could make independent decisions. He had faith in university education and perceived a degree as a means to his freedom and empowerment:

> I wanted a better income and indeed I wanted to be self-employed, you see I was, all I wanted was to have something to which I don't want to be dependent; like I was tired of, like you give me a job—sit here, go there, go there [and] for me I can't take a decision. I wanted something which I can do independently. I never wanted something which is like to be controlled. (Edgar)

Again, we note that the individual extrinsic motivations like the non-individual extrinsic motivations are highly linked to the sociocultural context of the participants and the importance accorded to university education by society. Acquiring a degree is believed to put one at an advantage in obtaining white-collar jobs that are associated with higher pay and the resultant better living. As such, all the extrinsic motivations narrated above were push rather than pull factors.

However, Jackie was also motivated to upgrade from diploma to degree because the university policy on credit transfer would shorten her study period from three to two years. This was possible because she would be exempted the whole of year one, allowing her straight admission to year two. Since she was motivated by what was happening within the university, we categorize this motive as a pull factor, and also through her story acknowledge that a favourable institutional environment is an important element in the university project of NTS. It can either encourage or discourage it (Schuetze & Slowey, 2002) not only before, but also at and after enrolment. However, discussion of how this happens has not been part of the objectives of this article and therefore remains excluded.

Conclusions and discussion

This qualitative study explored and examined the motivations of non-traditional students' enrolment in higher education. Three major findings were established: (1) motivations were found to be multiple, multifaceted and varied for each individual; (2) the sociocultural context of the African society including societal perceptions of university education were found to be the major factor shaping motivations of NTS to upgrade their educational qualifications; and (3) most motivations were found to be extrinsic in nature rather than intrinsic and based more on push rather than pull factors.

The finding that participants' motivations were multiple, multifaceted and varied for each individual corroborates findings of other studies. All participants had more than one motivation for returning to university, which is similar to the findings of other studies (e.g. Mudhovozi, 2014; Swain & Hammond, 2011). The study that Kember, Hong, and Ho (2008) did with 36 undergraduate students in Hong Kong validates that motivation was a complex phenomenon where students have multiple motives that are context dependent.

The context-dependent underscore in their study rhymes with the importance of the sociocultural context of the African society on motivations in our study, so much that there were inbuilt overlaps in interpretation of the narratives. For instance, although Albert's motivation of proving his worth to his father sounds intrinsic, his ultimate goal was 'to gain respect from him' which is very extrinsic and embedded in the context that Albert was being compared with his peers by his father. Naome's motivation 'I wanted to motivate others' is also intrinsic in nature but when closely analysed in our study, it is linked to her sociocultural world where as an elder sibling in her family, she has an obligation to her siblings and to society at large (Mbiti, 1990).

Overlapping motivations were also established by Swain and Hammond (2011) except that in their case, it just meant mixing up different motivations in one part of the narrative. Also similar in their study, is our finding that the participants' motivations were in some cases scattered throughout the interviews as different areas of their lives were narrated, possibly because 'lived experience is messy' (Owens, 2006, p. 1179). Another important finding is that even when a particular motivation was shared among many, each individual participant had their own experience in regard to that motivation. This finding chimes well with Kasworm's argument that each adult learner enrols 'with a complex set of beliefs, internal demands and external pressures' (Kasworm, 2003, p. 5).

The study also established that the sociocultural context of the African society including societal perceptions of university education were the major factor shaping the motivations of NTS to upgrade. This is because other than in their own capacity as motivation factors, they were also found to be embedded within decisions that were made at the individual level or pushed onto the individual by the family and work environments. All the participants for instance had at least one of their motivations derived from their social environment of family, work, society perceptions of university education or the sociocultural norms of the African society.

The influence of sociocultural factors on the individual decisions to participate conforms to the strong collectivism culture that characterizes African societies whereby choices of individuals are much related to choices of the collective (Preece, 2013; Lekoko & Modise, 2011; Mbiti, 1975). The concept of family in this study takes the extended family definition. This is because in Africa, individuals and their communities have obligations towards one another (Mbiti, 1990). The parent, spouse, sibling, (unborn) child, dead or live (extended) relatives and society at large can directly or indirectly play a motivational role in an individual's life. A study done by Mudhovozi (2014) on non-traditional male college students in a university in South Africa cited family and community support as some of the motivations for their participation. Alon's story that he was motivated to go to university because 'I was the only boy at home' and the obedience acts exhibited in different narratives of this study confirm the gender and age practice norms in the patriarchal African society. Although role modelling to children as a motivation was also established in a UK study (Wainwright & Marandet, 2010), it did not involve the unborn children and an imagination about the future as it does in this study.

On the other hand, the influence of the labour market environment on individual extrinsic motivations points to the new developments emanating from the forces of globalization that seek to challenge the collectivistic nature of the African societies through creation of opportunities that diminish individual obligations to family and society, and encourage development of new patterns of identity (Giddens, 2009). There is strong desire for people

to develop a meaningful connection between education, work, and biography (Meijers & Wijers, 1998) and to create a personal identity in society. To this end, we see an emerging hybrid kind of system characterized by conflicting demands between an individual's desire to make their own choices and the pressures coming from the sociocultural norms of the African society. The job- and career-related motivations cited in this study have been found in other studies both in the developed and developing contexts (e.g. Mudhovozi, 2014; Swain & Hammond, 2011) probably because of the changes taking place in the labour market globally.

Finally, the study established the existence of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. This finding corroborates the findings of another study on motivations and outcomes of part-time mature students in higher education in the UK (Swain and Hammond (2011). However, in their study, the intrinsic motivations were not necessarily linked to study choices, as was in this study. Both studies also revealed dominance of extrinsic over intrinsic motivations but in this study the extrinsic motivations explicitly outweighed the intrinsic motivations and not only derived from the rewards attached to them as was found in the UK study, but also from the sociocultural context of the African society, exemplified in the 'We' notion of the self. With the exception of Donald and Joshua, who each reported one intrinsic motivation, all other participants had only extrinsic motivations related mainly to social status, recognition in society and getting academic qualifications for the piece of paper's sake and not for productivity or well thought-out competence development plans. The other extrinsic motivations such as career advancement and/or promotions were speculative and not well planned except in the case of Edgar.

In view of these findings, there is no doubt that a university degree in Uganda, as it is in other countries in Africa, is still accorded a very high standing in society, just as it was in the colonial days and the immediate days following independence, when university graduates enjoyed relatively tangible benefits of higher education in the form of white-collar jobs (Teferra & Altbachl, 2004). Unfortunately, while many graduates in such economies anticipate obtaining decent employment upon completion, the reality in the graduate labour market today points to increasingly high unemployment rates (Nuwagaba, 2012; Ponge, 2013). This is because most countries in the region are characterized by large non-formal economies with limited opportunities for white-collar jobs that most graduates envisage to gain upon completing higher education (Minnis, 2006; International Labour Organisation [ILO], 2013). Uganda has an estimated 83% rate of unemployed youth (African Development Bank [AFDB], 2013) including university graduates (Nuwagaba, 2012).

In consideration of such changes taking place in the labour market, it is important that the purpose of an African university is balanced between a market-oriented university position (Mamdani, 2007) it possesses today and the developmental university position (Sawyerr, 2004) it held in the (post) independence period when universities were engines for supporting and serving the national development needs (Preece et al., 2012). Rather than just teaching for credential paper and social status acquisition and satisfying employability motivations of learners, universities especially in Africa ought to find a balance between serving the needs of society through engagement, yet without moving into a direction that is far removed from the ivory tower image. Universities ought to be cognizant of the motivations informing their learners' decisions to enrol, weigh them against the society needs and realities to determine what should be their purpose and mission.

In our view, an African university in the contemporary society should be able to devise the means of influencing students' perceptions and motivations towards university education. Universities ought to elaborate to its freshmen and women, and society at large, that higher education is not only about obtaining degrees for the paper's sake or for the purposes of obtaining a higher social status or satisfying social gaps in people's lives, but for providing a wide range of competencies that will enable learners not only to find employment and fit into society, but also to foster other functions of higher education such as the development of active citizenship (Veen & Preece, 2005; Zeelen, 2012). In the end, if these wider roles were to be embraced by universities, there would be graduates who could be critical thinkers with innovative attitudes and skills, able to challenge the status quo, face with confidence the challenges in the labour market and who could contribute to the development of their communities.

In this effort, autonomy and freedom (Sen, 2001) of learners should become the basis of educational processes so that their critical and reflective capabilities are developed to enable them to 'critically understand, interpret and give meaning to key issues in their lives and in society' (Lozano, Boni, Peris, & Hueso, 2012). This implies that evaluation of higher education would be done in terms of how it has enabled graduates to develop life projects and careers that they have reason to value. Consequently, intervention programmes in higher education would be those that empower and build the capabilities of students so that their capacity to function is not only seen in their economic and professional life, but in other spheres of their lives.

This qualitative study has given a detailed account of NTS' motivations for university education. However, there are some interesting links from the findings that we wish to highlight for further research. First, from the narratives on extrinsic motivations, participants anticipated a mutual relationship between their motivations for enrolment and outcomes after completion. This however remained largely elusive in this study. It would therefore be important to establish the NTS' experiences of the relationship between their motivations and the anticipated outcomes associated with obtaining a university degree, e.g. with a degree did they get their dream jobs, earn respect and recognition in society and live a better life? Second, there was evidence that the sociocultural context of the African society subjected participants to 'forced' decisions, including the choice for university education and choices of study. Given the perceived mutual relationship between motivation and learning outcomes, a study to establish this relationship would be beneficial, especially one that studied the implications extrinsic motivations might have on academic performance, retention and attrition outcomes.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank anonymous reviewers for their constructive comments and feedback on this article. Our appreciation also goes to the interviewees for their valuable time and participation.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Funding

This work was supported by the Netherlands organization for international cooperation in higher education-NUFFIC under Grant [NFP-PhD. 12/250].

Notes on contributors

Peace Buhwamatsiko Tumuheki is an assistant registrar at Makerere University, Uganda and a PhD student at the University of Groningen, the Netherlands. Her primary research interests include higher education, lifelong learning, social exclusion, social justice for development and action research.

Jacques Zeelen is a professor of Lifelong Learning and Social Intervention at the Institute Globalisation Studies Groningen (GSG) and an associate professor in the Department of Pedagogy (section Lifelong Learning), University of Groningen, the Netherlands. His research interests include lifelong learning and social exclusion, action research, early school leaving, international development cooperation and issues related to professionalisation in health care, social welfare and education.

George Ladaah Openjuru is an associate professor and the first deputy vice-chancellor, Gulu University, Uganda. His research interests include adult literacy education, lifelong learning and action research.

References

African Development Bank (AFDB). (2013). *Accelerating the AfDB's response to the youth unemployment crisis in Africa*. Tunis, African Development Bank group: Chief Economist Complex | AEB 4 (1).

Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.

Flick, U. (2009). *An introduction to qualitative research* (4th ed.). London: Sage.

Gallacher, J., Crossan, B., Field, J., & Merrill, B. (2002). Learning careers and the social space: Exploring the fragile identities of adult returners in the new further education. *International Journal of Lifelong Education, 21*, 493–509. doi:10.1080/0260137022000016172

Giddens, A. (2009). *Sociology* (6th ed.). Oxford: Polity Press.

Government of Uganda. (2008). *Statutory Instruments 2008 No. 35*. The Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions (Basic Requirements and Minimum Standards for Procurement Education and Training) Regulations, 2008.

Hennink, M., Hutter, I., & Bailey, A. (2011). *Qualitative Research Methods*. London: Sage.

International Labour Organisation. (2013). *Global employment trends for youth 2013: A generation at risk*. Geneva: International Labour Office.

Jarvis, P. (2007). *Globalisation, lifelong learning and the learning society: Sociological perspectives*. London: Routledge.

Kasworm, C. E. (2003). Setting the stage: Adults in higher education. New directions for student services. Special issue: *Meeting the special needs of adult students, 102*, 3–10. doi:10.1002/ss.83

Kasworm, C. (2005). Adult student identity in an intergenerational community college classroom. *Adult Education Quarterly, 56*, 3–20. doi:10.1177/0741713605280148

Kember, D., Hong, C., & Ho, A. (2008). Characterizing the motivational orientation of students in higher education: A naturalistic study in three Hong Kong universities. *British Journal of Educational Psychology, 78*, 313–329.

Lekoko, R. & Modise, O. (2011). An insight into an African perspective on lifelong learning: Towards promoting functional compensatory programmes. *International Journal of Lifelong Education, 30*, 5–17. doi:10.1080/02601370.2011.538176

Liamputtong, P., & Ezzy, D. (2005). *Qualitative research methods* (2nd ed.). Victoria: Oxford University Press.

Lozano, J. F., Boni, A., Peris, J., & Hueso, A. (2012). Competencies in higher education: A critical analysis from the capabilities approach. *Journal of Philosophy of Education, 46*, 132–147.

Mamdani, M. (2007). *Scholars in the market place. The dilemmas of neoliberal reform at Makerere University, 1989–2005.* Kampala: Fountain Publishers.

Mbiti, J. S. (1975). *Introduction to African religion*. Second revised edition 1991. Oxford: Heinemann Educational Publishers.

Mbiti, J. S. (1990). *African religions and philosophy*. Second revised and enlarged edition. Oxford: Heinemann.

Meijers, F., & Wijers, G. (1998). Flexibilisation or career identity? In D. Wildermeersch, M. Finger, & T. Jansen (Eds.), *Adult education and social responsibility: Reconciling the irreconcilable?* (pp. 73–95). New York, NY: Peter Lang GmbH.

Minnis, J. R. (2006). Non-formal education and informal economies in Sub-Saharan Africa: Finding the right match. *Adult Education Quarterly, 56*, 119–133. doi:10.1177/0741713605283432.

Mudhovozi, P. (2014). Mapping the misunderstood non-traditional male college students. *Journal of Social Sciences, 41*, 471–480.

National Council for Higher Education. (2013). *The state of higher education and training in Uganda 2012/2013: A report on higher education delivery and institutions*. Kampala: Author.

Nuwagaba, A. (2012). Toward addressing skills development and employment crisis in Uganda: The role of public private partnerships. *Eastern Africa Social Science Research Review, 28*, 91–116. doi:10.1353/eas.2012.0004

Owens, E. (2006). Conversational space and participant shame in interviewing. *Qualitative Inquiry, 12*, 1160–1179. doi:10.1177/1077800406293236

Ponge, A. (2013). Graduate unemployment and unemployability in Kenya: Transforming university education to cope with market demands and the lessons for Africa. *International Journal of Social Science Tomorrow, 2*(3), 1–12.

Preece, J. (2013). Africa and international policy making for lifelong learning: Textual revelations. *International Journal of Educational Development, 33*, 98–105.

Preece, J., Ntseane, P. G., Modise, O. M., & Osborne, M. (2012). The African university and community engagement in context. In J. Preece, P. G. Ntseane, O. M. Modise, & M. Osborne (Eds.), *Community engagement in African universities: Perspectives, Prospects and Challenges* (pp. 1–25). Leicester: NIACE.

Riessman, C. K. (2008). *Narrative methods for the human sciences*. London: Sage.

Sawyerr, A. (2004). Challenges facing African universities: Selected issues. *African Studies Review, 47*(1), 1–59.

Schuetze, H. G., & Slowey, M. (2002). Participation and exclusion: A comparative analysis of non-traditional students and lifelong learners in higher education. *Higher Education, 44*, 309–327.

Sen, A. (2001). *Development as freedom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Swain, J., & Hammond, C. (2011). The motivations and outcomes of studying for part-time mature students in higher education. *International Journal of Lifelong Education, 30*, 591–612. doi:10.1080/02601370.2011.579736

Teferra, D., & Altbachl, P. G. (2004). African higher education: Challenges for the 21st century. *Higher Education, 47*, 21–50.

Tukundane, C., Zeelen, J., Minnaert, A., & Kanyandago, P. (2014). 'I felt very bad, I had self-rejection': narratives of exclusion and marginalisation among early school leavers in Uganda. *Journal of Youth Studies, 17*, 475–491. doi:10.1080/13676261.2013.830703

Veen, R., & Preece, J. (2005). Poverty reduction and adult education: Beyond basic education. *International Journal of Lifelong Education, 24*, 381–391.

Wainwright, E., & Marandet, E. (2010). Parents in higher education: Impacts of university learning on the self and the family. *Educational Review, 62*, 449–465. Routledge. doi:10.1080/00131911.2010.487643

Zeelen, J. (2012). Universities in Africa: Working on excellence for whom? *International Journal of Higher Education, 1*, 157–165. doi:10.5430/ijhe.vln2p157