

Pull-push Factors and International Students' Experiences in Uganda: A Case of Two  
Universities

by

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## **Declaration**

I, Kiiza Kenneth Alfred, declare that this thesis, entitled “Pull-push factors and international students’ experiences in Uganda: A case of two universities” is exclusively my own work and that it has never been submitted for assessment, in part or wholly, to any other university for the awarding of any degree. Similarly, all scholarly sources consulted and quoted in the work have been duly recognised.

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The researcher, whose name appears on the title page of this thesis, has obtained, for the research described in this work, the applicable research ethics approval. The researcher declares that he has observed the ethical standards as formulated in the University of Pretoria's Code of Ethics for Research and Policy Guidelines for Responsible Research.

Signature.....

Date.....

## **Dedication**

I dedicate this thesis to my father, Misaaki Tibenda (deceased), my mother, Byabali Sarah and my uncle, Eryezali Kasaija (deceased), for the sacrifices they made to educate me.

To my wife, Kukundakwe Anet Abwooli, thank you for your love, patience, sacrifices, understanding and prayers during the five years of demanding academic work necessitated my being absent from home so many times and it affected the family both financially and emotionally.

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to examine the pull and push factors which international students took into account in their choice of Uganda and the institution at which they chose to study. The study focused on their lived academic and social experiences. The push-pull theory of migration was used as the theoretical foundation of the study. This was a mixed method study which utilised a multiple case study design with the focus on Makerere University (MAK) and Kampala International University (KIU) which are public and private institutions respectively. The pragmatic paradigm was deemed appropriate for the the purposes of the study and was, therefore, selected. Purposive sampling was applied to select the two universities and international students at these universities as the research participants. Quantitative data was collected by means of an on-line survey instrument which was administered to 227 respondents in both institutions while qualitative data was collected by means of a structured interview guide administered to 28 respondents.

The study findings revealed a combination of pull factors that the international students had considered in their choice of Uganda. These included quality of education in the country, a desire to learn or improve their English, ease in terms of visa processing, political and geographical factors, family and parental influence, economic reasons and Ugandan hospitality. In addition, the push factors from their home countries were discovered to be academic, sponsorship conditionalities, family, personal and domestic education policy related. In respect to the choice of institution, the findings showed that MAK was a preferred institution due to its long history and academic reputation while KIU was chosen for its reputation but also in view of the large numbers of international students it enrolls and its geographical location.

In respect to their lived academic experiences, the findings indicated that the international students had found the method of delivery of group work and presentation in plenary for discussions to be extremely enriching as well as cordial and supportive faculties which facilitated the learning process. In respect to their social experience, Ugandans were found to be friendly and supportive when approached and international students found it useful to spend time with them. However, the study also established that the international students had experienced discrimination off the campuses. In short, the study revealed that the international students had had positive academic and social experiences although the frequent strikes (MAK) had affected them severely and also that much still need to be accomplished at the institutional and national levels.



The study suggested that the government and higher education institutions should invest more heavily in making Uganda an attractive education destination country by designing appropriate national and institutional, internationalisation policies and strategies and implement them effectively.

**Key words:** Academic; choice; discrimination; experience; internationalisation policy; social.

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To whom it may concern

This is to certify that I, Alexa Kirsten Barnby, a language practitioner accredited by the South African Translators' Institute, have edited the thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Philosophiae Doctor (PhD) (Education Management) titled "Pull-push factors and international student's experiences in Uganda: A case study of two universities" by Kiiza Kenneth Alfred.

The onus is, however, on the author to make the changes and address the comments made.



## **List of Abbreviations**

ACP	Africa, Caribbean and Pacific
AGRA	Alliance for Green Revolution in Africa
AHP	Analytic hierarchy process
ANOVA	Analysis of variance
ARISE	African Regional International Staff/Student Exchange
CAES	College of Agriculture and Environment Studies
CSAA	Crop Scientists for Africa Agriculture
DAAD	German Academic Exchange Programme
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GOU	Government of Uganda
HEI	Higher Education Institution
ICEF	International Consultants for Education and Fairs
IIE	Institute of International Education
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IUCEA	Inter-University Council of East Africa
IUIU	Islamic University in Uganda
KIU	Kampala International University
KYU	Kyambogo University
MAK	Makarere University, Kampala
MBA	Master's in Business Administration.
MOE	Ministry of Education
MoESTS	Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Sports
MUARIK	Makerere University Agricultural Research Institute, Kabanyoro
MUBS	Makerere University Business School
NCHE	National Council for Higher Education

NDP	National Development Plan
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
P4HPT	Partnering for Health Professionals Training
PPP	Public private partnerships
R & D	Research and development
UCU	Uganda Christian University
UEPB	Uganda Export Promotion Board
UEW	University of Education, Winneba (Ghana)
UNCST	Uganda National Council for Science and Technology
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UOTIA	University and Other Tertiary Institutions Act

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## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

#### **1.1 Introduction**

Higher education plays an important role in ensuring the acquisition of the necessary skills by students to enable them to become productive members of society (Ghazarian, 2014). In this regard, Schoole and de Wit (2014) observed that the internationalisation of higher education is one of the major forces that influence and model the acquisition of such skills to be able to meet the challenges of the 21st century. This corroborates the opinions of Abbott and Silles (2016) and Knight (2008) that the expansion in academic mobility as well as the growing interest in cross-border education have contributed to the overall growth in higher education throughout the world. In addition, existing literature (Cantwell, Luca, & Lee, 2009; Martin & Rizvi, 2014; Verbik & Lasanowski, 2007) shows that international student mobility has, for some time, been central to and the most visible indicator of the internationalisation of the higher education space. For example, global statistics indicate that the majority of students studying in countries other than their own exceeded 4.3 million in 2011 (OECD, 2013); while it has been projected that this figure will reach 7 to 8 million by 2025 (Altbach, 2013; UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2011; and Altbach, Reisberg, & Rubley, 2010)

The trends and volume of movement in respect of international students' mobility have metamorphosed significantly from the known South-to-North direction to a multidirectional flow (Wadhwa, Bhandari, & Blumenthal, 2012). According to Hazelkorn (2011), the traditionally known destination countries of Western Europe and North America are facing overwhelming competition from the developed countries elsewhere in the world, particularly in relation to the "rise of the East", namely, China and India (Marginson, 2011). It is interesting to note that, while vertical student mobility, which involves students moving to countries and universities with a higher reputation than those in their own countries, was, until now, the main reason for student migration (Altbach & Teichler, 2001), recent literature points to greater horizontal student mobility between countries and universities of similar education quality (Jon, Lee, & Byun, 2014). This is in line with the concept of the "education hub" which refer to international students study within a specific geographical region, also termed, intra-student mobility (Knight & Woldegiorgis, 2017; Jon, Lee, & Byun (2014). There has been extensive academic research conducted throughout the

world on international student mobility (De Wit, Agarwal, Said, Schoole, & Sirozi, 2008). These include studies on the push-pull factors of international students seeking higher education abroad (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002) the determinants of international students' flows and experience in the developed, English-speaking countries (Lee, 2010; Marginson et al., 2010; Li & Bray, 2007; Chen, 2007); the orientations of international students by geographical region of origin (Cantwell et al., 2009); and the attraction and satisfaction of foreign students (Kondakci, 2011), as well as studies focusing on the experiences of individual students of studying abroad (Lee & Rice, 2007).

On the African continent, studies focusing on the mobility of international students have been conducted by, among others, Knight and Woldegiorgis (2017), Woldegiorgis, Jonck and Goujon (2015), Schoole and Lee (2015), Schoole and Knight (2013) and Schoole (2011). Mohamedbhai (2014) noted that a large proportion of the African "elite" pursue their studies outside of their native countries. He found that, in 2008, about 223,000 students from sub-Saharan Africa were enrolled at institutions in foreign countries. Similarly, Abbott and Silles (2016) noted that African and Asian students make up more than 60% of the foreign students in the international student arena. These statistics provide a clear indication of the extent of and trends in the student mobility direction of African students.

Corresponding research on cross-border education has been conducted in East Africa by scholars such as Njuguna and Itegi (2013), Jowi (2009) and Schoole (2008), among others. Ssempebwa et al. (2012), Njuguna and Itegi (2013), IOM (2015) and Schoole and De Wit (2014) assert that, for many decades, the East African region has constituted a dynamic, cross-border, education zone owing to the region's common language, close trade links and political stability. However, Sanga and Ahn (2014) claim that cross-border higher education in East Africa is in its early stages of development, while Ayoo (2009) points out that it is difficult to obtain useful statistics on the state of cross-border higher education in any of the three East African countries.

In Uganda international student mobility is traceable back to the birth of formal higher education in the country, specifically after Makerere University (MAK) was founded in 1922 as a technical college to serve foreign students from the British East African territories of Kenya, Tanganyika and Uganda (Omaswa, 2013). Literature indicates that Uganda also received a few students from Malawi and Zambia (Sicherman, 2008) and also Zimbabwe in Southern Africa (Schoole & de Wit, 2014). Overtime, the enrolment of international students' at Uganda's higher education institutions

has increase, rising from 16,244 in 2010 to 17,156 in 2011 and with MAK and Kampala International University (KIU) registering 1,899 and 6,175 as the highest numbers of international students respectively (NCHE, 2011). However, some decline has been reported, which warrants investigation (NCHE, 2013/14; MAK Visitation Committee Report, 2016). Literature (NCHE, 2010, 2011; Othieno & Nampewo, 2012) has revealed that foreign students in Uganda come mainly from Kenya, Tanzania, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Burundi, Rwanda, Southern Sudan, Somalia and Eritrea.

Studies on cross-border education have been conducted in Uganda for example, by Kessio and Mureithi (2014) who conducted a study on the socioeconomic contribution of cross-border education using KIU as a case study. Itaaga, Musoke, and Mugagga Muwagga (2013) carried out a study on the internationalisation and regionalisation of higher education in Uganda, Othieno and Nampewo (2012) conducted a study on trading in the education sector, and Mukasa (2012) on assessing the socioeconomic impact of international students on Ugandan universities. Mande and Nakayita's (2015) study on the effect of cost of education on choice of private universities in Uganda was informative in as far as cost influences students' choice of private university education. Mulumba's (2013) study delved into the extent to which cross-border students at KIU, Kampala University, Kyambogo University (KYU) and MAK expressed satisfaction with regard to the library, ICT, accommodation, sports and health services in their universities. The studies referred to concentrated on the socioeconomic contribution of international students to the economy, trade, cost of education, and satisfaction with specific services offered by the university. However, the aforementioned studies all made little mention of either international students' pull-push factors to their countries and universities of study or their lived experiences during their courses of study in sub-Saharan Africa; all of which differ from the focus of this study.

The main aim of this study was to gain both new insights into and a deeper understanding of the international students' pull-push factors playing a role in their choice of Uganda and the university where they were studying and also to examine their lived experiences. The inspiration for the study was derived from the paucity of scientific knowledge explaining why international students, for so long, have chosen to leave their countries and come to Uganda to study. Equally stimulating was the desire to investigate, from the point of view of research, the lived academic and socioeconomic experiences of international students in the course of their academic engagement and life in Uganda. Most importantly, however, this study was part of a wider investigation into academic

student mobility in Africa that involved the participation of nine African countries, namely, Cameroon, Kenya, Senegal, Morocco, Nigeria, Egypt, Ghana and Uganda. This study was based on a study conducted in South Africa by Professor Chika T.M. Schoole, an academic at the University of Pretoria, and Professor Jenny Lee of the University of Arizona (Lee & Schoole, 2015).

## **1.2 Statement of the Research Problem**

World over study abroad is one of the fastest growing dimension of higher education. This phenomenon is largely driven by national and institutional policies in both sending and receiving countries. As a developing country, Uganda is no exception to this reality, even though it lacks an internationalisation policy and strategy in Ugandan higher education (Itaaga et al., 2013) to drive activities in this industry. Nevertheless, the number of international students enrolling at public and private universities in Uganda has been growing over time (Othieno & Nampewo, 2012; NCHE, 2010, 2011; Ogachi, 2009), increasing from 12,930 in 2005 to 17,156 in 2011 and representing 9% of the total enrolment of 198,066 in 2011 (Ministry of Education Statistics Abstract, 2011). In the academic year 2014/2015 and 2015/2016, the total enrolment of international students in Ugandan higher education institutions was 20, 892 and 18, 943 respectively (NCHE, 2015/2016). Although the available statistics indicate that international students are continuing to choose Uganda, among other countries, as their study destination (NCHE, 2011, 2013/2014, 2015/2016), albeit with some decline in numbers, there is limited research and literature that explain either the motives driving inbound international students or their lived academic and social experiences while studying at Ugandan universities (Othieno & Nampewo, 2012). Thus, little is known about the reasons why they choose Uganda and, specifically, the university at which they are studying and their lived experiences in Uganda. This gap in literature and understanding is quite surprising, particularly in view of the fact that Uganda has been a recipient of international students since 1922. In light of these gaps, this study explored the pull factors from their home country and the push factors that influence international students' choice of Uganda and the institutions at which they were studying, and examined their lived academic and social experiences in Uganda.



### **1.3. Aims of the Research**

This study sought to explore and understand the pull factors from the home country and the push factors into Uganda that influence international students studying in Uganda to choose Uganda and the university that they were attending; and examine their lived experiences.

### **1.4. Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of the study was to investigate higher education student mobility in Africa with a specific focus on Uganda to gain new insights into and a deeper understanding of the motivating pull-push factors of international students and their lived experiences.

### **1.5. Main Research Questions under Investigation**

Why do international students studying in Uganda choose Uganda and, more significantly, the higher education institution that they select?

#### **1.5.1. Specific Research Questions**

The study addressed the following subsidiary questions:

- What are the pull factors that motivate international students to choose Uganda and the university they attending?
- What are the push factors that cause international students to leave their home countries to study in Uganda and the university they decide to attend
- What are the lived experiences of international students at Ugandan universities?

### **1.6. Rationale for Studying the Phenomenon of Student Mobility**

My decision to pursue a doctoral study on international student mobility originated from my professional, personal interests and my intellectual curiosity about the life experiences of international students in their destination countries. This study was conceived after an extensive literature review and the discovery that there is a wealth of research and literature on international student mobility globally but limited research and literature focusing on East Africa, and Uganda, in particular. Based on both this discovery and my curiosity, I made a decision to undertake this study and to gain an insight into the Ugandan international student perspective. Professionally, I have worked for nine years at Uganda Management Institute: a higher education institution as a

branch campus centre manager, a course manager, a module leader and a facilitator. I have interacted with international students during their academic and non-academic engagement during their life stay at the institution and in Uganda. My extensive travels to various African countries offered me a solid foundation and invaluable experiences that have enabled me to learn to adapt to different environments, systems, cultures and prejudices. Indeed, these are some of the challenging contexts which international students experience while studying in a foreign country. On a personal level, for a number of years I harboured the desire to undertake my PhD study programme outside my own country as a strategy to gain an international outlook and experience, interact with students from different countries and gain intercultural and professional competence in order to increase my international employability on completion. This desire was in line with the conviction among parents and international students that education outside home country is a life-changing experience that exposes students to broad perspective of the world even when it has challenges (Rhodes, 2014) as well as the fact that, at the end of their study, there are better work opportunities and earnings, coupled with attainment of superior community rating than would otherwise have been the case (Li & Bray, 2007). Such student return to their home countries with worldwide understanding and expert linkages (Cheung & Xu, 2014) as well as the skills and expertise required in the current labour market (Zhukovskiy & Simak, 2015).

In viewing student mobility through a different lens, Njuguna and Itegi (2013) argue that researching this phenomenon is important because international education is a channel through which educational standards are streamlined, promote human understanding across countries, and creating regional linkages to compete with other regions of the world. In addition, student mobility, which is within the education services sector, is a strategic sector in the GDP growth of a country as it brings new prospects for exports (Othieno & Nampewo, 2012). In Uganda, education, as one of the key sectors of the economy, which accounted for 5.3% of the GDP in the financial year 2008/09 is a major foreign exchange earner from students from the East African community (EAC) and beyond. Earnings from the export of education services to the region amounted to US\$ 36 million in 2010, up from US\$ 30.4 million in 2009 (Uganda Export Promotion Board, 2012). In addition, education is a major source of revenue for commercial enterprises with the exchange of students or faculties possessing a degree of export value in a country's balance of payment, derived from accommodation, cost of living and travel expenses among others (Knight, 2004).

This study is the first in Uganda to empirically examine both the pull-push factors playing a role in international students' decisions to relocate from their home countries to Uganda and in respect of universities they choose and their lived experiences, particularly in a developing country context. Of the Ugandan universities, KIU is the leading university with 6,715 students, followed by MAK (1,899), Bugema University (862), and the Islamic University in Uganda (IUIU) (767), Makerere University Business School (MUBS) (671) and Busoga University (575). However, others with fewer numbers also continue to attract international students (UEPB, 2012). This rapid increase in numbers of international students in receiving countries requires the keen commitment of both researchers and policymakers (Halic, Greenberg, & Paulus, 2009) so that their unique concerns and needs are understood (Özturgut & Murphy, 2009). Recognising the needs of international students is more relevant now than ever before considering that they are young adults with different levels of acquaintances, come from different countries, and experience diverse cultural and linguistic challenges. Abbott and Silles (2016) opines that international students' financial support systems differ in that some are on government or university sponsorships, others on grant aid, some paid for by companies, parents and siblings and some, although not many, are from a wealthy background. They also opine that these students differ in life styles, aspirations and expectations in their destination country, have inbuilt reservations, anxieties, and displeasures. However, even when daily experiences are characterized by uncertainties some international attain positive academic, emotional and social experiences in their new settings.

Thus, the primary question which this study sought to address was how their daily academic and social life encounters occurs in Uganda at two universities – one public and the other private – and what motivations and meaning they attach to it investigated under the specific objective that examined their lived experiences in Uganda. Focusing on Uganda, a developing country which has established itself as a competitive education hub within the EAC and beyond (NCHE, 2011), it was anticipated that the study would make a contribution to filling the gap in the existing information in current literature on international student mobility. This literature tends to focus primarily on developed country study destinations such as the US, the UK and Australia (Hazelkorn, 2011). It is my hope that the findings of this study would create better conceptual understanding and knowledge that could be used to develop policies and programmes that would improve service delivery not only to international students but also to the entire higher education landscape, particularly in Uganda.

## **1.7. Contextual Background to the Study**

Traditionally, higher education in Africa was offered by public institutions funded, managed and controlled by the government (Ogachi, 2009). Uganda was not an exception to this trend. Uganda's formal higher education dates back to 1922 when Makerere University was founded as a technical college to serve students from the British East African territories of Kenya, Tanganyika and Uganda (Omaswa, 2013). Since then, higher education in Uganda has remained a public undertaking financed by the central government (Bailey, Cloete, & Pillay, 2010). Both the Government of Uganda (GOU, 2012) and Mamdani (2009) point out that, upon admission, students in Uganda were entitled to free but full scholarships that covered tuition, health, transport and an allowance termed a "boom" to cover their personal needs. Over time such student facilitation was considered unsustainable. According to Woldegiorgis and Doevenspeck (2015), many African nations operating delicate economic situations led to the poor financing of the physical infrastructural setups that are necessary to make the teaching and learning environment competitive. This situation prompted donors to demand for a review of the education system and its funding mechanisms.

The neo-liberal policies and structural adjustment programmes of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), that were introduced in the 1980s, called for major state policy reforms, interrogated the justification and role of the state in development and argued for a departure from community investment in higher to primary education (Collins & Rhoads, 2010). According to Mamdani (2009), these economic reforms, which were adopted by the government of Uganda in the 1980s and 1990s, plainly pointed to a shift from government financing to market systems in higher education service delivery. These developments led to the emergence of private universities and institutions in the higher education sector in many African countries, including Uganda (Varghese, 2013). The University and Other Tertiary Institutions Act (2001), as amended (2006, 2008), further enhanced the growth of private universities in Uganda. This Act provides for the formation of and regulates the operations of all higher education institutions in Uganda, whether public or private. The number of international students enrolling in public and private universities has developed steadily over time (Othieno & Nampewo, 2012; NCHE, 2010, 2011; Ogachi, 2009). This number increased from 12,930 in 2005 to 17,156 in 2011, and represented 9% of the total enrolment of 198,066 in 2011 (MOE Statistics Abstract, 2011). However, despite the annual growth in

enrolment, the reasons and motivations for the international students' choice of Uganda and the university where they study, let alone their lived experiences, have not been explored. Accordingly, this study was designed and conducted in order to uncover the rationale for the inflow of international students into Uganda from both the East African region and also other parts of the world.

### **1.7.1. Makerere University Kampala (MAK)**

Makerere University began as a small technical institute in 1922 and has grown to become one of Africa's prominent universities (Omaswa, 2013). It was established to meet the high demand for native artisans in the East African territories of Uganda, Kenya and Tanganyika although there were a few international students from Malawi and Zambia (Sicherman, 2008). In 1937, Makerere University developed into an institution of higher education, offering post-secondary school certificate courses (Omaswa, 2013). In 1949 it became the University College of East Africa, affiliated to the University College of London and offering courses leading to the general degrees of its then mother institution. It was established as the University of East Africa on 29 June 1963, the special relationship with the University of London came to an end and degrees from the University of East Africa were established (Sicherman, 2008). On 1 July 1970, through an Act of Parliament, Makerere became an independent national university of the Republic of Uganda, offering undergraduate and postgraduate courses and awarding its own certificates and degrees (Omaswa, 2013). Sicherman (2008) and Omaswa (2013) concur that MAK has achieved world-class status through the ground-breaking research carried out at the Medical School. *The Time Higher Education Magazine and World University Ranking 2016/2017* placed MAK as the third best university in Africa and the best in Uganda and the East African region (MAK Visitation Committee Report, 2016, p. xv). It is on the grounds of its advantaged position and reputation that both national and international students consider MAK as their first choice when applying for university admission, applying to other government universities as a second choice while the private universities are considered a third favourite (Kwesiga & Ahikire, 2006). This is a clear indication that, for both national and international students, gaining admission to study at MAK is deemed a privilege to which many aspire but which only a few succeed in achieving. The NCHE (2011) report indicates that MAK and Kampala University, as two public universities in Uganda, had an enrolment of 1,899 and 6,715 international students respectively. The MAK Visitation

Committee Report (2016) indicates that, probably as a result of MAK's high ranking and reputation, in the 2005 academic year total student enrolment was 18,007 and, of this number, 1,485 (8%) were international students; while, in the 2008 academic year, the total student enrolment was 19,034, with 1,706 (9%) of this number being international students. It is, thus, clear that, between 2005 and 2008, the trend in international student enrolment was between 8%-9% of the total university admission. However, there was a sharp decline in international student enrolment of between 2% - 3% of the total student admission in the 2010 to 2015 academic years. In view of MAK's reputation and rapid growth following the liberalisation of higher education, the student population rose from 6,000 to 40,000 over a ten year period, with 6,000 being government-sponsored and 34,000 privately sponsored (Omaswa, 2013). In the academic year 2012/2013 the student population was 41,122 but increased to 42,505 in the 2013/2014 (MAK Visitation Committee Report, 2016). This trend still exists today. The literature cited above provides clear evidence that MAK has a long-standing record of international student admission since its inception in 1922 although a study of this magnitude to illuminate the reasons for the international student enrolment and the challenges these students encounter has not yet been conducted. It is, thus, anticipated that this study will fill the long-standing information gap in respect of the motivation for international students' decision to study Uganda, and at MAK, and tease out their lived experiences.

### **1.7.2. Kampala International University (KIU)**

Based on its ability and competence to offer relevant education Kampala International University (KIU) was established in 2001 as a private university. KIU received its University Charter (the highest level of national accreditation) from the Government of Uganda in March 2009. It is a top (South-South) foreign students-receiving university in East Africa (Sempebwa, Eduan, & Mulumba, 2012). Since its establishment KIU has expanded and has branches in Tanzania and Kenya as well as study centres in South Sudan, Rwanda and Nigeria. It is a member of prominent bodies such as the Commonwealth Universities Association, the African Universities Association and the Inter-Universities Council of East Africa. KIU attained fifth position in a nationwide universities ranking survey in 2015. KIU leads other universities in Uganda in respect of the enrolment of international students, for example, in 2011 the number of international students enrolled at KIU stood at 6,715 (NCHE, 2011; Commonwealth Secretariat & UEPB, 2012). This is partly attributed to the supportive and pleasant learning environment (Mulumba, Anumaka and

Azah, 2016). It is important to note that other universities in Uganda do admit and enrol international students, but on a much smaller scale as compared to KIU. Ogachi (2009) shows that international students in Uganda mostly originate from Kenya, Tanzania, DRC, Burundi, Rwanda, Southern Sudan, Somalia and Eritrea. In addition, there are students from Nigeria, Malawi and Sierra Leone who enrol at KIU (Mulumba et al., 2016). Given the diversity of international students who enrol at KIU, as highlighted in the preceding discussion, studying this phenomenon at KIU was seen as an opportunity to obtain diverse responses to the research question and attain quality findings. While scholars have conducted studies involving international students the focus of these studies was primarily on cost, trade, socioeconomic contribution and satisfaction with university service. However, as already mentioned, the focus of this study was on the pull-push factors in relation to international students' choice of Uganda as a country in which to study, the specific university selected and gain a deeper understanding of their lived experiences. The context provided justifies the choice of KIU as a research site.

### **1.8. Conceptual Review and Defining International Student Mobility**

The concept mobility is broadly defined by scholars and its usage in the context of this study is derived from the different views. Cantwell (2011) labelled the concept of mobility as the physical and social movement from one state and/or organization to another; while "international", also termed "transnational", refers to activities that cross the boundaries of countries and do not originate directly from the authority of nation states. Marginson (2006) adds that international academic mobility refers to the movement from a higher education institution (HEI's) to another within an international education system. Elaborating further on this concept, Bartram and Terano (2011) argue that the conceptualisation of academic student mobility is based on the location of the scholar and, hence, is context-specific. This view ties in with Cantwell's (2011) view that academic mobility is best understood contextually, rather than as a universal concept. Cantwell (2011) goes on to argue that academic mobility is shaped by the individuals, institutions and governments that search for academic travellers in an international competitive higher education space. With regard to this, Knight and Woldegiorgis (2017) posit that academic mobility is a broad concept that has long been practised in HEI's and involves the movement of academic staff, students, courses/programmes and providers, among others. Contributing to the debate, Rachaniotis, Kotsi, and Agiomirgianakis (2013) contend that student mobility contributes significantly to the process of human resource development attained by student's travelling abroad.

In line with this debate, Beine, Noël, and Ragot (2013) posits that the international students mobility is associated with circulation of competent workers across the globe. According to Knight and Woldegiorgis (2017), it is no easy task to come up with a concise understanding of student mobility in higher education because the movements of students are sometimes misunderstood, with application of concepts such as “migration” in the setting of student mobility. Wei (2012) associates international student mobility with global talent circulation in respect of which both developed and developing nations enact relevant laws and policies (Rizvi, 2011) to compete in acquiring the best human capacity available in the higher education service market.

However, Verbik and Lasanowski (2007) and De Wit et al. (2008) argue that what constitutes student mobility, and who a mobile student remain unresolved, with multiple views on it. In fact, they offer the view that different countries have their own definition of the concept of international students in line with their education systems. In addition, Rachaniotis et al. (2013) recognises that understanding student mobility in an international education landscape is a difficult undertaking at individual, institutional and societal levels. In line with the apparent disagreement among scholars on the conceptualisation of student mobility, it appears that the concept of an international student is viewed and used differently within the higher education discourse in European Union (EU) countries, non-EU countries and in Africa countries. Indeed, Richters and Teichler (2006) cited in Perkins & Neumayer, (2014), posit that the majority of countries define foreign students according to citizenship, while others define them according to their country of residence.

Likewise, Okeke (2010) opines that, in Europe, the phrase “international student” is used to differentiate between the student from within the EU and those from outside the EU. However, Beine et al. (2014), OECD (2013), UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2012), Eurostat (2011) and Richters and Teichler (2006) define internationally mobile students as persons who have physically crossed an international border between two countries with the objective of participating in educational activities in the country of destination. Similarly, Valenzuela, Palacios, and Intindola (2015) define international students in the American context as persons who have registered in HEIs who are on temporary student visas. In light of the literature cited above, it may be concluded that there is no one unifying definition upon which to rely but that the use of the term is dependent on the region where the scholar is situated and, hence, it is context-specific (Bartram & Terano, 2011).



From the African perspective, a learner is classified as an international student in an African university if the student is not in possession of any of the elements of citizenship as defined by the immigration law of the country in which the university is located (Okeke, 2010). In short, the myriad of definitions suggests that, in European universities, the status of “international students” refers to all students from outside the EU, while, in Africa, the term refers to all students from outside a specific country in which the university is located (Okeke, 2010). Uganda defines an international migrant, including an international student, as an individual who is foreign-born (IOM, 2015). This is in line with the concept of immigration as defined as the movement of people into a country. This study adopted Okeke’s (2010) definition of an international student as a person that does not hold any element of citizenship as defined by the immigration laws of the country in which the university is located. Given the diverse conceptualization of international student mobility as a worldwide phenomenon, it therefore requires increased regional and international cooperation among countries accompanied by workable policies, strategies and ethical standards (Jowi, 2009) to deliver the appropriate standard of education expected. In order to acquire a crystallised understanding of the motivating factors and lived experience while in Uganda, the study was underpinned by a theoretical base, which is discussed in the section below.

### **1.9. Theoretical Framework**

A theoretical framework is an overall perspective from which one sees, grasps, represents and interprets the world (Abend, 2008). This study on pull-push factors and international student experiences in Uganda and based on a case study of two universities was anchored in the pull-push migration theory advanced by Ernest Ravenstein (1889). He pointed out that the movement of people from one place to another is conditioned by some “push-pull” forces from the sending and/or receiving destinations. Ravenstein (1889) posited that non-conducive conditions in one place “push” people from that place, while attractive conditions in the external location “pull” them out. Lee (1966) built on this push-pull theory further in his argument that the decision to migrate is informed by existing state of affairs in the place of origin; current conditions situations in the choice of destination; interceding reasons that informs the verdict to travel is made; and the characteristics of the intending traveller. In his view, the decision to migrate is not purely determined by the push or pull factors (pp. 51) but by interceding factors such as distance, the cost involved, and the severity of the immigration laws, all of which the intending migrant must be able to cope with. Lee further observed that there are diverse reasons why people move either on a

short-term or long-term basis from one country to another and that these reasons are academic, political, environmental, economic and social. He reasoned that people are “pushed” from their places of domicile by unattractive conditions, such as conditions of civil and political unrest, war, difficult economic situations and poverty. In the same way, people are “pulled” or attracted to destination countries where there are opportunities that may be exploited, better education and job openings, peace and security. I would argue that, in applying the push-pull theory in the field of higher education and student mobility dynamics, the conceptualisation of the push-pull factors at a personal level informs the final decision as to whether the push factors in the place of origin outweigh the pull factors or attractions in the destination country. In terms of an opinion-based analysis, what constitutes a pull factor to one student may not be so to another while, similarly, what one may consider to be a pull factor may not be so to the other. Thus, it would seem that one pull-push factor that is considered significant and important by both a student and his/her parent(s) could influence the decision of a student to migrate while the reverse also holds true.

Applying the principles proposed by Ravenstein (1889) and Lee (1966), Altbach (2004) contends that the push-pull model suggests that students are “pushed” out of their home country due to inadequate or inferior educational resources, and are “pulled” to a another country in order to attain better education than he /she can achieve from their home country education system. Sehoole and Lee (2015) used this theory to explain the phenomenon of international student mobility the global, continental and regional levels using South Africa as a case study. They found that students were attracted from South Africa’s neighbouring countries to seek a better quality of education than that available in their home countries. Sehoole (2011) and Mazzarol and Soutars (2002) refer to the push factors as features that make a country or its institutions less attractive and, as such, cause students to seek opportunities elsewhere. Kritz (201) names such push factors found within a country as the low standards in higher education teaching, few high quality universities with high ranking, among others. Sehoole (2011) reasons that pull factors are those alluring characteristics that make a country and its HEI’s eye catching to international students - which he refers to as “magnet of opportunities”. Kondakci (2011) presents the pull factors in a host country as the expectation of receiving domin specific/ expert training, a good climatatic conditions, affordable food variety, the prospects for learning foreign language skills, familial reasons (e.g. having a relative), a hospitable population in the host country, and the consideration of peace and stability, to name but a few. This theory was applied in this study in its examination

of the factors that “pushed” the international students studying in Uganda and also the host country factors that “pulled” them into Uganda and to the institutions they were attending.

### **1.10. Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study may be found on the following four levels, namely, international, national, institutional and personal levels. At the international level, the study may be seen in its contribution to filling a gap in the existing literature on student mobility with existing literature tending to focus more on developed country study destinations such as the US, the UK and Australia (Hazelkorn, 2011), and less on countries that have attracted international students for a long time but in respect of which there are no scientific research findings to which to refer. Specifically, the contribution of this study on the international level may be said to lie in the synthesised literature it provided on internationalisation and student mobility from the African perspective but with a focus on the Ugandan experience as based on the findings from MAK and KIU.

At the national level, the study findings resulted in recommendations that may guide the development of an evidence-based internationalisation policy and strategy by the policymakers in government. This is in recognition of the increasing numbers of international students which requires that the devotion of researchers and policymakers (Halic et al., 2009) to enable them to recognize and appreciate the special apprehensions and desires of students who study in foreign countries (Özturgut & Murphy, 2009). Similarly, at the institutional level, the findings may create an opportunity for a better conceptualisation and increased knowledge of the dynamics of international students and provide specific recommendations that may inform the formulation of a university internationalisation policy, structural change, strategic and action plans designed to improve service delivery to international students.

The findings of the study shall position the Ugandan higher education system on an equal footing with its peers in the international higher education area from which international students may decide on a destination that meets their academic goals. Furthermore, the value of this study may be said to derive from the findings that confirmed that international students’ pull-push factors and lived experiences are both diverse and context-specific. As the findings indicate, the respondents had had home-acquired academic and social life encounters but had attained their study-abroad experiences through a process of daily interaction and reflection, from which they gained the

intercultural experience, professional competence and networks required in the global market (Cheung & Xu, 2014; Zhukovskyi & Simak, 2015). I posit that both the academic and social learning experiences to which international students are exposed during their study abroad prepare them to work effectively within a global environment.

It is important to note that the study confirmed that, even if academic mobility itself is not a new phenomenon, international student mobility is a contemporary phenomenon and that the direction of student flow is changing from the more developed countries towards the less developed countries, with more focus on regionalisation (Itaaga et al., 2013; Lee and Schoole, 2015; Knight & Woldegiorgis, 2017). It is anticipated that, based on the challenges highlighted in the study, regional governments and higher education institutions nationally could engage in a collaborative partnership to avert hindrances to international student mobility as a strategy to support the regionalisation of higher education. In addition, given that the demand and search for high quality higher education had increased globally and it poses both political and security risks, it may prompt governments to develop policies focusing on international students.

### **1.11. Organisation of the Thesis**

The thesis comprised a total of eight chapters.

**Chapter one** introduced the study. It provided a brief definition of the problem investigated and explained the research objectives and research questions which guided the study. The chapter also provided some insights into studies conducted on international students from global, continental, regional and national perspectives with relevant statistics on Uganda. In addition, the chapter also presented the aim of the study, its purpose, the rationale of the study, the conceptual review and the definition of international student mobility. Finally, the chapter provided an outline of the entire thesis.

In **Chapter two** I reviewed the most current and relevant literature on the conceptualisation of international student mobility as a current phenomenon in higher education. This literature review was presented in two parts. Part 1 focused briefly on the reasons why a literature review is necessary in any study, followed by a discussion on international student mobility from the global, continental, regional, national and institutional perspectives. Part 2 presented a thematic review specific to push factors at home that motivate the desire to move abroad, pull factors and lived

experiences of international students. These are discussed under socio-cultural, economic and academic themes in the Ugandan context.

**Chapter three** discusses the methodology used in the study. Specifically, it examines and discusses the philosophical foundation of the study; the research design used; the reasons why the case study design was deemed appropriate for the study; the strategies adopted to integrate the mixed methods in the study; the criteria for the selection of the institutions used as cases in the study; and the justification for the choice of the study population. In addition, the chapter discusses the sampling technique and selection criteria used as well as the data collection processes and procedures which were employed at each institution. Furthermore, the chapter presents the researcher's personal reflections and experiences during the process. Finally, the chapter explains how the data collected was analysed, the strategies applied to ensure data trustworthiness, and how ethical concerns were managed throughout the entire study.

**Chapter four** presents the study findings on the push-pull factors as well as an analysis and interpretation of the international students' pull-push factors in the Ugandan context.

In **Chapter five** presents the findings on the pull-push factors as well as an analysis and discussion of international students' pull-push factors in the choice of MAK and KIU.

**Chapter six** presents the study findings as well as an analysis and discussion of the lived academic experiences of the international students within the context of MAK and KIU, Uganda.

**Chapter seven** presents and discusses the study findings on the socioeconomic lived experiences of the international students.

**Chapter eight** crystallises the conclusions and recommendations derived from the study and identifies areas for further research.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Literature Review**

#### **2.1. Introduction**

This chapter presents an in-depth examination of existing literature on international student mobility within the higher education sector. The chapter is presented in two sections. Section one examines literature on international student mobility from the global, continental, regional and higher education in Uganda perspectives, capturing both the international student perspective and the institutional internationalisation perspective. In part two literature is discussed according to the themes derived from the research questions, i.e. the push factors from the home country, the pull factors into Uganda and the institution chosen; the lived academic and socioeconomic experiences international students in Uganda. In conclusion, a summary of the literature review is presented.

#### **2.2. International Student Mobility - Global Perspective**

Over the past decade there has been an increase in the demand for higher education throughout the world. This has contributed to the emergence of borderless higher education operationalised in all types of education institutions at the local, regional, national and international levels (Middlehurst, 2001). According to Martin and Rizvi (2014) and Prazeres (2013), among the various categories of migrants, international students are the most travelled people internationally. The main reason for this is that physical relocation to another country is a fundamental element of the internationalisation of higher education which has a rich history through which international academic are attracted and engage in knowledge creation and dissemination (Li & Bray, 2007; Rizvi, 2011). This confirms that international student mobility is not a new phenomenon. However, it is the contemporary curiosity it has attracted and the challenges it faces that have drawn the attention of both policymakers and academics (Prazeres, 2013), because the number of international students have exponentially increased worldwide (Michel, Romain, & Lionel, 2012). Literature sources (Rizvi, 2011) indicate that, due to the significance of attaining global ability in a competitive world, the number of international students is projected to grow (Kritz, 2015). This surge is associated to the internationalisation processes in a worldwide higher education arena (Woldegiorgis & Doevenspeck, 2015; Docquier & Rapoport, 2012). As countries progressively gain from student mobility, the race to attract and keep students has widened the choices available to students to undertake international education (OECD, 2013) even though the role of government

has transformed from just direct sponsorship of student to being an enabler as well as control the emerging industry (Li & Bray, 2007). The most popular countries and universities receiving international students are investing in aggressive marketing strategies, supported by national policies (Knight, 2012) which are developed specifically to attract the brightest students to study and work in their countries as governments strive to fulfil their innovation and research agendas. This development calls for HEIs' to understand and monitor international student's mobility inclinations as they focus on their advertising strategies (Choudaha & Chang, 2012).

Kritz and Woldergiorgis (2017) observed that, at the time of their study, China and India had the largest number of their students studying abroad. On this point, Li and Bray (2007, p. 815) and Watjatrakul (2014) posit that governments and institutions in other parts of the world are increasingly viewing China as a key source of students. Kritz (2015) pointed out that, in 2008, China alone had 451,156 students studying abroad, which accounted for 16% of the global total with Asia providing the largest numbers followed by Europe. This phenomenon is due to increasing financial ability of families as a result of the economic growth in those regions. This view is in line with Kritz's (2016) assertion that Western developed countries have remained at the centre of the international student flow, while African countries are at the periphery but with major involvement in student mobility noticed with international students enrolling in neighbouring African countries. The increase in family financial resources is associated to the increase in the admission of international students at the bachelor's degree level. For example, in 2010 to 2011, nearly one-third of all international students in the USA joined to study at the bachelor's level (IIE Open Doors, 2011); with more students predicted to sign up in English language taught courses. Knight and Woldegiorgis (2017), and Knight (2012) attest to the shift from student mobility to programme and provider mobility, with growing desire to provide international educational programmes and courses to students in their home country.

### **2.3. International Student Mobility – Continental Dimension**

Even though international student mobility has received little devotion in the literature on African migration (Kritz, 2015, p. 31), it is still, a global occurrence that require more regional and international partnership in areas of developing appropriate policies, strategies and applying ethical standards in all its processes (Jowi, 2009). According to Woldegiorgis and Doevenspeck (2015), mobility of African students in the higher education landscape is not a recent phenomenon, while Njuguna and Itegi (2013) assert that cross-border higher education pre-dates African

colonization period. For example, it is reported that pre-colonial higher education institutions in North and West Africa, such as Karawiyyinn in Fez, Morocco established in 859 AD and Al-Azhar in Cairo, Egypt founded in 970 AD, are among the oldest universities in the world Arab Information Centre (1966) cited in Mngomezulu (2014, p. 134). Many scholars travelled from Europe, Asia and the rest of Africa to these centres to acquire knowledge. However, Njuguna and Itegi (2013) argue that, with the introduction of colonisation, any system of education designed by African pre-colonial nations were on the continent were destroyed and interchanges with new education policies and practices which were designed to meet the interests. Based on the immediate need to create local managerial capacity to manage the local colonies, the colonial masters embraced the sending of African students to European universities for higher education. Rizvi (2011) reports that sending African students abroad was common practise by the British and French colonial masters, who considered it to be more cost-effective than establishing more higher education institutions in their colonies. Study abroad for university education in diverse destinations in Europe and America (Woldegiorgis & Doevenspeck, 2015) was deemed to be a workable strategy to support the growth in human capacity (Kritz, 2015). This strategy explains why, at the time of African countries' independence, there were few higher education institutions in the continent.

Knight (2012) observed that the original aim of helping students from developing countries to migrate to another country was to complete a degree and then return home but this is shrinking swiftly because nations are now rivalling to hold onto brain power. However, this claim notwithstanding, African countries are, for a number of reasons, continuing to send students to foreign institutions to study in various higher education fields. According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS, 2009), the movement of African students to other regions for higher education studies has been rising since the 1990s with the number estimated to reach 8 million by 2020 due to the better life anticipated after completing studies (Woldegiorgis & Doevenspeck, 2015). In addition, Woldergiorgis and Doevenspeck goes on to assert that African student mobility in the post-colonial independent countries in recent years may be attributed to a number of other factors, including the ease of admission into the diverse academic programmes and courses; desire to gain quality education; more professional openings linked to international qualifications; and the high chances of getting scholarships. More recently, Kritz (2015) has argued that the majority of



African students who are undertaking international education are financed by their families who have the financial capacity to pay tuition at a foreign university. This argument is in line with Li and Bray's (2007) finding that not all Chinese students in foreign universities obtain scholarships from agencies but that, instead, well-to-do parents in China fund their children. While I concede to the above arguments by Kritz (2015) and Li and Bray (2007), my counter-argument is that not all Africans studying abroad are from wealthy families. In anticipation of a higher return to the investment in their children after the completion of their studies, some families take out long-term loans from financial institutions or even mortgage their family land in order to meet their children's tuition requirements. I agree with Zeleza's (2005) assertion that parents and students are prepared to pay vast amounts of money to attain the qualifications available abroad. In addition, a number of African students, whose families are not able to afford the fees and living costs charged by foreign universities in Europe or America, prefer to study in neighbouring African countries (UNESCO Institute of Statistics, 2009).

In terms of foreign destinations, most African students travel to, among others, France, the UK, the USA, Germany, Malaysia, Italy and Australia (Kritz, 2015). The same trend is illustrated by Marshall (2013) who points out that the top six African countries that sent the largest number of students abroad in the same year were Morocco 42,800 (11.3%), Nigeria 38,851 (10.2%), Algeria 22,465 (5.9%), Zimbabwe 19,658 (5.2%), Cameroon 19,506 (5.3%) and Tunisia 19,506 (5.1%). According to Woldegiorgis and Doevenspeck (2015, p. 107), France has been the most favoured destination for African students for the past 20 years. Based on the existing literature and past practices, it is observed that international student mobility in Africa follows colonial language ties, namely, Anglophone, Francophone and Lusophone Africa (Knight & Woldegiorgis, 2017). Knight and Woldegiorgis further point out that, besides the major destinations indicated above, countries such as Italy, Australia, Sweden, Norway, Finland, China, India and Japan are now also attracting African students (p.108). Confirming this colonial language trend, the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2009) observes that, since the 1990s, the majority of international students from Anglophone Africa have been from countries such as Zimbabwe, Nigeria, South Africa, Kenya, Egypt, Botswana, Ethiopia and Ghana while the UNESCO Statistics (2012–2013) indicate that, for international students from the Lusophone African countries of Angola, Cape Verde,

Mozambique and Sao Tome except for Guinea Bissau, their main study destination country was Portugal.

While the literature cited has illustrated the direction in movement of African students outside the African continent, there is also much literature on the mobility of African students within African countries. Knight and Woldegiorgis (2017) and Kritz (2015) argue that, apart from South-North (inter-regional) student mobility, there has been an increasing trend in South-South (intra-regional) student mobility since the 1990s. In support of this assertion, Bolsmann and Miller (2008), Sehoole (2011), Chien and Kot (2012), Mohamedbhai (2014), Kritz (2015) and Lee, Paulidor, and Mpage (2017), have pointed out that South Africa has become the destinations for many African students from the SADC region. The Higher Education Management Information System data (DHET), cited in Lee & Sehoole, (2015) indicates that, by 2013, the numbers of African students studying in South Africa had increased to nearly 53,800. Kritz (2015) further indicates that Angola has played a major role as a main destination for international students from Portuguese-speaking African countries; for example, in 2010 Angola hosted 6,530 foreign students, mainly from the Cape Verde, Mozambique and São Tomé, while Marshall (2013) pointed out that students from the DRC and Guinea-Bissau tend to choose Angola for their higher education training.

Although Okoli (2013, p. 14) has argued that intra-regional mobility in Africa has been increasing, as highlighted in the literature, Woldegiorgis and Doevenspeck (2015), Ayoo (2009) and UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS, 2009) assert that the majority of African higher education institutions do not have complete data on student mobility. They go on to argue that, where data on student mobility is available, it is inconsistent, incomplete and, in most cases, not collected by a central agency. Zeleza (2005) observes that, given the uneven level of economic and educational development among African countries, the configuration of educational interchange crossways on the continent is also uneven. This is partly explained by the national policies in the destination countries which are designed to regulate the flows of foreigners. For example, the study by Lee et al. (2017), entitled “Sliding doors: strategic ambiguity in study visas to South Africa” vividly illustrated that the South African visa policy mirrors strategic ambiguity in its implementation with uncoordinated actors in the process. I subscribe to Woldegiorgis and Doevenspeck’s (2015) argument on rigid university entry mechanisms and visa application and renewal procedures in

South Africa which, inadvertently, discourage some would-be international students from applying to South African universities.

Linked to this discussion is the fact that, while, in principle, international students are welcome in the South African higher education system, there are indicators that appear to illustrate the contrary. For example, in their study on the South African rationales for international student recruitment, Bolsmann and Miller (2008) point out that African students from outside South Africa's borders do not comprise a homogeneous group that is treated equally by South African institutions. Sichone (2006) confirms that many SADC students wishing to study in South Africa have to involve tedious administrative negotiations for student visas and study permits as well as live with the threats of a xenophobic environment. However, I do not agree with Sichone's (2006) assertion that it is only African international students who are at risk of xenophobia because international students who are not from the African continent are also exposed to similar fears about xenophobic attacks by South African nationals.

It emerged from the literature cited that African international students' mobility dates back during the pre-colonial days although it was given momentum by colonial period as a strategy to create African human resource to pursue the interests of the colonial powers. The mobility trends at the time of this study were reflective of and still influenced by the former colonial masters although new players, not formerly African colonisers, have created competition in the global student market (Altbach & Teichler, 2001). Due to high costs of study abroad in Europe and America it would seem that African families and students with financial means prefer to study in neighbouring African countries, contributing to the growth in inter-regional students mobility in favour of those African countries which are considered to have superior education systems. It has also been observed that the national policies of destination countries have an impact on the attractiveness of these countries to international students. However, it is not easy to obtain up to date national and institutional data on international student.

#### **2.4. International Student Mobility – East African Regional Policy Framework for the Education Sector**

Cooperation in East Africa dates back to the early 20th century when, for example, Kenya and Uganda signed a customs union agreement in 1917 which Tanganyika joined in 1927. The

agreement provided for a customs union, a common external tariff, currency, postage, and common services in transport, communication, research and education (SID, 2011). On the other hand, student exchange in the East African countries dates back to the colonial times when Makerere University was the only higher education institution in the region (Woldegiorgis & Doevenspeck, 2015; Schoole & de Wit, 2014; Omaswa, 2013; Sicherman, 2008). These authors further indicate that, since colonial times, international students from East Africa and various parts of Africa have travelled to Uganda for higher education training, thus making it the main destination country. However, both Odebero (2011, 2015) and Ogachi (2009) observe that, for many years, the cross-border movements in search of higher education between the countries in the East African Community (EAC) have been unequal but in Uganda's favour for a number of reasons, including the low tuition fees charged. In this regard, Education is considered as one of the areas of cooperation and an important tool for effective EAC integration (GOU, 2015, p. 165). In light of the role of education in social and economic development, Knight (2013) avers that countries initiate diverse higher education regional policy reforms through regional integration forums. It has been observed that a strong regional partnership is based on strong education institutions and well harmonised education policies and practices. As Rizvi (2011) notes, most established systems of higher education have developed their own policies to attract fee-paying international students. With this in mind, the EAC partner states have expressed their intent to transform themselves into knowledge-based economies, an achievement that requires investment in order to build a human resource base and which may effectively foster national and regional development. Article 102 of the EAC Treaty for the Establishment of the EAC commits the partner states to co-ordinate their human resources development policies and programmes, and to develop common programmes in basic, intermediary and tertiary education. In light of this need, the East African Community member states adopted the East African Qualification Frameworks for Higher Education (EAQFHE) as an encompassing tools for guiding a systematic approach to to serve as useful instruments for guiding higher education institutions in curriculum development, delivery, assessment and certification in fulfilment of the labor market needs (EAQHE, 2015. In addition, it calls on the member states to harmonise curricula in order to encourage and support the mobility of students and teachers within the EAC. Similarly, the Common Market Protocol (CMP), Article 11(b) and the EAC 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Development Strategies provide for the free movement of labour while the Common Market for Eastern and Southern African (COMESA, of which the EAC states

are members, approved two protocols: a) on the free movement of people, services and goods; and b) on the gradual relaxation and eventual elimination of the requirement for visas within the COMESA member states. The principle underlying the adoption of such policy options was to ease mobility within the East and Southern African countries undertaking trade, including trade in education. Related initiatives adopted included constituting the Inter-University Council of East Africa (IUCEA) by the EAC which enacted the IUCEA Act 2009. The IUCEA is a leading body that coordinates universities in the region (SID, 2011). Schoole and de Wit (2014) highlight that, as a regional higher education body, the operations of the IUCEA were effectively integrated into the EAC operational framework with an overall aim of fostering the mobility and employability of human resources. According to Ayoo (2009), as the regional framework through which universities in East Africa collaborate, IUCEA continues to play an important role in ensuring that the region's higher education 'reconnects' with the international higher education landscape.

In view of the fact that international students have been studying in African neighbouring countries for such a long time (Odebero, 2015), it is argued that, with the common market protocol signed in 2009, education and training is one of the strategic areas through which regional integration may be achieved. The education and training curricula delivered at all levels of education are critical factors in the realisation of national economic competitiveness within the global economy (SID, 2011). In order to achieve global competitiveness, countries become involved at the strategic levels in remodelling the existing higher education landscape with a focus on the policy, regulatory, financial and structural bearings or in supporting the infrastructural development of networks, standards and communications (Middlehurst, 2001). In line with the literature cited above, I argue that, while the expectations, policy design and regulatory and institutional structures of the EAC member state are well intentioned, the operationalisation across the countries differs given the differences in the expected gains, political stability, economic strategies and "perceived level of threats" in a country. On a similar note, I submit that this depends on the level of a country's deliberate efforts in respect of the sensitisation and inculcation of the value of equity and fairness in the government offices in all its institutions as they deliver service to the citizens in the EAC states. It is further argued that, without a carefully designed mechanism to monitor and assess the extent of the implementation of the EAC agreed protocols, strategic ambiguity in the said implementation by member countries (Lee et al., 2017) will thwart all the good intentions. In light

of this broad outlook from the East African perspective, the next section contains a discussion on the mobility of international students' in the Ugandan context.

## **2.5 Higher Education and International Student Mobility in Uganda**

In the context of Uganda, higher education refers to the post-secondary studies, training and/or training for research provided by universities and other tertiary institutions, licensed and/or recognised by the NCHE (NCHE, 2013/2014). Higher education system and international student mobility in Uganda may can be traced back to 1922 when Makerere was founded as a technical college to serve students from the British East African territories of Kenya, Tanganyika and Uganda (Omaswa, 2013; Woldegiorgis & Doevenspeck, 2015) as well as some foreign students from Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe in Southern Africa (Sehoole & de Wit, 2014) but also to train civil servants. Woldegiorgis and Doevenspeck (2015) argue that, since then (1922), students have been travelling from EAC member states and various parts of Africa to Uganda for higher education training. Consequently, in 1937, the Ugandan colonial administration expanded the college into a Higher College for East Africa to award diplomas and certificates while, in 1949, the college became a University College of the University of London (ibid.). Bailey et al. (2010, p. 19) point out that, in 1970, the University of Easy Africa, of which Makerere College had been a constituent college since 1963, dissolved into three fully fledged independent universities, i.e. Makerere University in Uganda, Nairobi University in Kenya and the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania. Makerere University became the first independent, national university with the enactment of the Makerere Act of 1970, which granted it discrete autonomy and status, to offer undergraduate and postgraduate courses and award certificates and diplomas independently (Omaswa, 2013). This was the foundation of formal higher education in Uganda and Makerere University remained a public institution and funded public sources from the central government (Bailey et al., 2010), as well as the only university in Uganda. However, since the late 1980s and early 1990s, the increasing demand for higher education together with declining budget allocations to public institutions, among other reasons, created ideal circumstances for the creation of private universities (Mugabi, 2009).

It is important to note that during the early years of the National Resistance Government (NRM) that inherited a poorly performing economy in 1986, Mamdani (2007) points out, that the government could not, at that time, afford to sustain university education through the sponsorship of qualifying students from government resources and thus adopted reforms. Such reforms

included the introduction of tuition fees for parents and students who would not qualify for government sponsorship but who could afford to pay or make a contribution to the students' university education (World Bank, 2010). In view of the increased demand for higher education, in 1988 the Government of Uganda approved the establishment of the Islamic University of Uganda (IUIU) as the first private university in the country realising that it could not meet the demand of an increased population for higher education (Mugabi, 2009; Bailey et al., 2010). Mugabi (2012) goes on to argue that this was the main reason why private universities have emerged in the vanguard of higher education in Uganda and, consequently, transformed the system from a homogeneously public system to a public-private mix. Under the current arrangement, the private universities enrol a significant number of students as compared to the public universities. This development may be linked to the liberalisation of the economy and the enactment of the Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act, 2001.

The tertiary or higher education sector in Uganda comprises the following three sub-sectors or tiers, namely, degree-awarding universities; other degree awarding-institutions (ODAs); and other tertiary institutions (OTIs) offering degrees, diplomas and certificates (NCHE, 2013). These three sub-sectors attract international students to the courses and programmes they offer. Of the three sectors, which are categorised, universities which are categorised as public and private have the largest enrolments. The public or state-funded institutions are established under an Act of Parliament while private universities are chartered and/or licensed (NCHE, 2013/14). At the time of this study there were 51 universities in the country, of which nine (9) were public and 42 private universities (NCHE, 2015/2015). The emergence of more private universities has attracted greater numbers of private, international students to enrol at Ugandan universities in recent years. For example, NCHE (2011) reported an increase in the number of foreign students enrolling at Ugandan tertiary institutions from 16,244 in 2010 to 17,156 in 2011. The percentage of non-Ugandan students studying at Ugandan higher education institutions in absolute terms increased from 17, 068 in 2011/2012 to 21, 016 in 2013 (NCHE, 2012/2013). In the academic year 2014/2015 and 2015/2016, the total enrolment of international students in Ugandan higher education institutions was 20, 892 and 18, 943 respectively (NCHE, 2015/2016); and 18, 478 students in 2016/17(NCHE draft report, 2016/2017). While there are variations in the numbers of international student, as reflected above, it is, nevertheless, possible to discern a clear pattern,

namely, a steady increase in the enrolment of international student despite the decline in enrolment (NCHE, 2013/2015, 2015/2016; MAK Visitation Report, 2016). Woldegiorgis and Doevenspeck (2015), Kritz (2015), UEPB (2012), Othieno and Nampewo (2012), NCHE (2010, 2011, 2013), and Ogachi (2009) observe that Uganda is a major destination country for students from EAC countries, with the majority of foreign students coming from Kenya, Tanzania, the DRC, Burundi, Rwanda, South Sudan, Somalia, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Cameroon. The second subsector of Ugandan higher education comprises the other degree-awarding institutions (ODAI). These are categorised into public or private institutions and offer various qualifications. The Uganda Management Institute is the only public ODAI offering PhDs, Masters, diplomas and certificates (NCHE, 2013/2014) The National Council for Higher Education report notes that the third subsector of higher education, the OTIs, are not a preferred destination of the majority of students although these are the institutions that produce the middle cadres who are required for economic and industrial development.

As highlighted in the literature above, the Government of Uganda (GOU) provides both the enabling policy and legal framework (UOTIA, 2001, as amended in 2006, 2008) as well as education system with appropriate levels that meet the academic requirement of international students. In light of this, Horta (2009) argues that the state, as an enabler, provides funds and enacts supportive national policies, regulations and structures that enhance the achievement of internationalisation agenda of the university. Similarly, Ahmad and Buchanan (2016); Americanos (2011) and Morrish and Guo (2011) argue that an open minded international viewpoint of a country conveys a liberal attitude, a productive image of the higher education service providers and the decent reputation of the country's higher education system and programmes (OECD, 2013). The positive image of the country, its education system and study programmes creates a desire among international students and they, therefore, choose it as a study destination.

## **2.6. Student Mobility – Institutional/Campus-wide Strategies**

Cantwell (2011) opine that, in this age of globalisation, universities are perceived as playing a critical role in the national, regional and international agendas in terms of the global competition for knowledge and innovation, as well as attract and maintain talented international students to participate in the actualization of the university and national research agenda. In addition, they



make a contribution to human capital development as a means and an engine of growth (Nour, 2011). Furthermore, in order to attract international students, universities design and adopt deliberate internationalisation policies and process, including study abroad, exchange programmes, research and scholarly collaborations, and partnerships, among others (Stromquist, 2007). The determination to internationalise is an issue of major concern in higher education today as a strategy to address the competitive pressures of the new environment. Nevertheless, what and how to internationalise, the nature of strategies, accomplishments and methods to use, and the stakeholders to engage with are choices that institutions often tussle to address (De Wit, Hunter, Howard, & Egron-Polak, 2015). This vies supported further by Stromquist (2007) who argues that universities encounter globalisation pressure differently, depending on whether they are private or public institutions. Njuguna and Itegi (2013) offer another perspective of the argument and posit that, while international education poses critical challenges for Africa governments and universities, the available prospects in the industry are mostly untapped. At the institutional level, the leadership approaches of the chief executive, his/her awareness levels, competence and astuteness in respect of decision-making are critical in the adoption of policies that attract international students (Middlehurst, 2001). This ties in well with the assertion of Nolan and Hunter (2012) that universities that successfully internationalise do so in their unique ways, yet those that fail to do so demonstrate similar arrangements in respect of the decisions they make.

De Wit et al. (2015) opines that, for a university to succeed with internationalisation, it must have in place an institutional internationalisation policy or strategy to facilitate and guide all its internationalisation processes. Kritz (2015) maintain that the majority of African universities lack an institutionally designed internationalisation policy and strategy to guide their actions with this making it difficult for them to meet the needs of international students. With absence of comprehensive data on international students at both institutional and national levels, it complicates any comparisons of the mobility of international students (Kritz, 2015; Woldegiorgis & Doevenspeck, 2015). Sherry, Thomas and Chui (2010) maintain that institutions which do not address the unique needs of international students may leave the students feeling disappointed, unfulfilled and even exploited.

In line with the preceding discussion, Knight (2012) suggests that, for international students to benefit from their university life experiences, universities should adopt strategies that take into

account intercultural and international dimension in the teaching-learning process. These strategies should focus on international students' integration with diverse groups of students and in the community they live. Phrased differently, Lee and Opio (2011) state that it is the responsibility of the host institutions to create welcoming environments for international students if they are to be well integrated into both the university and the community. In view of the fact that international students are heterogeneous and multi-cultural and have had various experiences, it is incumbent on higher education institutions to design the appropriate strategies required to help these students to adjust and adapt to the new learning environment (Ackah & Kuranchi, 2015, p. 399). Sofu Nandzo, Asola, and Ajongbah (2013) allude to the importance of a supportive environment in helping students to develop respect for both the self and others. I argue that the attainment of this perspective requires a change of mindset on the part of the entire academic and non-academic staff who interact with international students during their academic stay at campuses. In addition, deliberate strategies for integration need to be designed for life outside of the classroom and in the community as this life affects the academic performance of the students, particularly if they fail to fit in with the set-up in the surrounding community. While I concede to Leask's (2009) view that international students make a valuable contribution with their diverse cultural perspectives and experiences and they have the potential to transform both the campus and the classroom into a vibrant microcosm of the world, I recognise that bringing together international students and domestic students in a class does not necessarily yield meaningful interaction between them if such interaction not guided by the university's strategies.

Thus, I concur with Leask's (2009) view that the attainment by students of intercultural competencies requires a campus environment and culture that motivate and encourage interactions between the domestic and international students both in and out of the classroom. Accordingly, I argue that it is essential that a range of people across institutions engage with the university internationalisation agenda. I further contend that, over time, such engagement would improve the interactions between the international and domestic students and also with the with academic and non-academic staff to the benefit of all the role players in the university. I posit that the success and failure of a university's internationalisation agenda is a function of the strategic focus of the members of the university council in respect to their understanding of the trends in international higher education; how these trends affect daily operation of the university and what is required of the university if it is to remain competitive. Similarly, a broad understanding of internationalisation

by both the academic and non-academic staff and their view of the international student in the university is paramount to understand the university's level of preparedness to address the challenges that international students' face. The next section contains a discussion of university specific approaches to operationalise an internationalisation agenda.

### **2.6.1. Makerere University: Internationalisation Strategies**

It is of strategic importance that, in the interests of their desire to continue recruiting and optimally serving international students, HEIs' understand the requirements, anticipations and the trials they face (Wilkins, Balakrishnan, & Huisman, 2011, and Wilkins & Huisman, 2015). The internationalisation agenda and strategies of Makerere University Kampala (MAK) are evident in its current Strategic Plan 2008/2009-2018/2019. Its vision statement is as follows, "To be the leading institution for academic excellence and innovation in Africa" while its mission statement is "To provide teaching, learning, research and service responsive to national and global needs". Both the vision and the mission statements are designed to reposition the university to enable it to meet the emerging social and economic challenges through its three core pillars/functions, namely, teaching and learning; research and innovation; and knowledge transfer and partnership.

Firstly, under teaching and learning, the university recognises that, through teaching and learning, its strategic focus is to produce a graduate who will not only be equipped with traditional academic and subject-specific skills; but will also possess the generalist skills relevant to and applicable in the local, national and global markets. Accordingly, the university undertakes to ensure that it teaches these skills through a shift to more learner-centred methodologies and the provision of high-quality and relevant programmes. Delivery of such programs is through strategies such as: creating and nurturing satellite centres/branch campuses; refurbishing and upgrading the distance teaching and learning infrastructure; instituting collaborations/joint curriculum development with local and international academic and research institutions; awarding of joint degrees and the operationalisation of quality assurance mechanisms (MAK Strategic Plan 2008–2019).

Secondly, under research and innovation, knowledge generation, innovation and utilisation are recognised as crucial for repositioning Makerere University as a research-led university in a competitive global economy. The strategies adopted to ensure that the university become a research led-university include operationalising the university's research agenda; strengthening staff and student research capacity; strengthening the university's research execution, management

and coordination; mobilising more funds to support research and dissemination; and enhancing networks in research (MUK Strategic Plan 2008–2019).

Lastly, under knowledge transfer partnership and networking the strategies involved include the involvement of stakeholders in the university agenda and curriculum development; the establishment of collaboration and networking with both public and the private sector institutions; the creation of a research, technology and incubation business centre as well as supervising and evaluating students on fieldwork placement (MUK Strategic Plan 2008–2019).

The one key strategy in the internationalisation agenda in the MAK strategic plan is demonstrated in its commitment to the recruitment of international students; integration of international aspects into teaching; learning and collaborative research; awarding of joint degrees; and the franchising of programmes in foreign countries. The plan recognises that attracting international staff and students is, in some cases, dependent on the unique aspects of the university curricula that are readily available elsewhere. The international relations office is intended to advance the university's aim of internationalising various aspects of its programme although its overall goal is to augment the global competitive edge of Makerere University (MAK Strategic Plan 2008–2019). Itaaga et al. (2013) identified the prevailing Makerere university internationalisation strategies as supporting staff to up-grade their competence at master's, PhD and post-doctoral degrees levels in collaboration with overseas universities, sponsorship by a number of organisations, trips abroad for academic staff to attend scholarly conferences, attendance of domain specific seminars and workshops to acquire current knowledge and an awareness of trends in respective disciplines; student exchange programmes, placement of both local and foreign based external examiners in the assessment of PhD Theses and MA dissertations, supporting staff to register membership in regional, continental and international higher education collaboration, coordination and networking organisations such as the IUCEA, the Association of African Universities, and the Association of Commonwealth Universities, among others. However, it is argued that, although these strategies are in place, their implementation is affected by the repeated strikes that involves the teaching, non-teaching staff and the students. The strikes creates a feel of unpredictability about the safety of the university which discourage potential applicants, while also thwarting the collaborative and partnerships arrangements entered into with other foreign academic and organisations, thus compromising the opportunities available in the higher education landscape.

### **2.6.2. Kampala International University (KIU) Internationalisation Strategies**

The National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) stipulates the appropriate classroom standards and the overall study environment which a university must provide. In its internationalisation effort intended to attract international students, KIU capitalized deeply in erection of classroom to create a favourable learning environment (Mulumba, 2013). In addition, KIU is the leading private university in Uganda with the highest number of enrolled international students, namely, 6,715 students (NCHE, 2011). KIU recruits and deploys foreign academic staff in its teaching and learning processes as well as engaging international non-academic staff in the university administrative processes (Mubaraka, Senyonga, & Sumil, 2013). It operates branch campuses in Tanzania and Kenya; and operates study centres and marketing offices in South Sudan, Rwanda and Nigeria. It subscribes to and is a member of the Commonwealth Universities Association, the African Universities Association and the Inter-Universities Council of East Africa. In addition, it engages in academic co-authorship and joint publications to raise its international profile.

### **2.7. Push Factors in the Home Country Motivating International Student Mobility**

Lynn and Lee (2013), citing Wolff (2006), assert that migration between countries occurs if and when such movement resolves social and, especially, class contradictions within both countries. One set of paradoxes pushes people out of a country, while another set of contradictions in other countries pulls them in. In their view, the desire to attain better education which is a paradox in their own country plays a critical role in international students' decisions to move away to where they expect to acquire quality learning outcomes. In view of these ambiguities in the global higher education landscape, Roberts, Chou, and Ching (2010) observe that a number of researchers who make use of the pull-push design submit that, in the main, international students' decision-making evolve with initial desire made to study overseas and winding up with the choice of a host institution. This occurs when the student considers that the country and institution they are interested in has the supportive policies and infrastructure that will enhance their achievement of academic and professional goals. According to Amy et al. (2010), where the national education policy, system and the university mission statement meet, international student mobility, as one of the features of internationalisation, becomes both a university and a national priority. It is argued that this happens within a framework of certain domestic push factors and destination pull factors. Amy et al. (2010) argue that push factors which are country-specific and negative forces stimulate interest in a university education beyond the national borders. Elaborating on this concept, Park

(2009) termed push factors as driving force factors that are internal, domestic and home components that initially drive students' outward mobility in search of foreign higher education. Park (2009) identifies dissatisfaction with domestic higher education as a push factor which students identify, while Sehoole (2011) and Dimmock and Leong (2010) are of the view that failure to meet the local educational demand is a strong trigger of outward student mobility.

Docquier and Rapoport (2012) attest that outward mobility is often driven by various personal and situational factors and each individual tends to have a different sets of driving force factors. Kritz (2011) argues that difficulties in obtaining admission to universities at home, combined with perceptions that the education quality is better in tertiary institutions abroad, have encouraged many African families that are able to afford to do so to send their children to Europe, North America or elsewhere for their tertiary studies. In his study on student mobility and doctoral education in South Africa, Sehoole (2011) identified push factors as lack of adequate funding; significant overcrowding; and low quality of academic programmes. In their study of Ukrainian students Zhukovskiy and Simak (2015) established that the recent military activities in the East, high levels of corruption in the home university, inadequate government financing of Ukrainian higher education, and the limited use of innovation and research in education were the most critical push factors that were affecting the outward student mobility trends among Ukraine students seeking better living and education environments abroad than those in the Ukraine. Park (2009), Kritz (2011), Sehoole (2011), Docquier and Rapoport (2012), and Zhukovskiy and Simak (2015) all concur that international students tend to be dissatisfied with and, therefore, stressed by their domestic higher education systems, and that this influences their decision to leave their home country to study abroad.

However, in his 2-D Model: Driving Force Factor and Directional Factor, Park (2009) found that students satisfied with their domestic education were not necessarily motivated to study abroad, while Zhang et al. (2013) argue that an individual's decision either to move abroad or study at a home country university is significantly influenced by a complex interplay of prevailing push and pull factors in the international, national and local environment as well as individual factors. This view is supported by Kingman's (2007) assertion, cited in Jirovsky, Hoffmann, Maier, and Kutalek (2015), that the decision and direction of the movement of people hinge on an intricate interface

of socioeconomic factors as well as the legal and policy frameworks in both the sending and the receiving country.

Hagopian, Thompson, Fordyce, Johnson, and Hart (2004) maintain that, while the external and internal environments may be grouped differently, they nevertheless interact with and influence each other, resulting in the decision either to either stay in the home country or to leave it. For example, Lynn and Lee (2013) established that societal work pressures with extended workdays and doubt as to the capacity of the domestic education system to prepare their children for competitive employment were, among others push factors, while the availability of the English language as a medium of instruction in the USA constituted the pull factor in respect of these Korean parents' decision to send their children abroad to acquire an education in a recognised and cost friendly institution. However, in his study, "Choosing Canadian graduate schools from afar: East Asian students' perspectives", Chen (2007) established that positive push factors exerted more influence than negative push factors in the decision regarding study abroad; for example, culture/language, economic and academic factors exerted more influence than "desired education not available", "home country lacks research facilities", "limited career prospects at home" and "uncertain political situation". This perspective appears to indicate that the wave of positive push factors in a country may be countered by an equally strong wave of internal negative push factors. However, the one set must override the other for a decision to be made, as a state of equilibrium is not anticipated to pertain at any one moment. Although push factors are often responsible for students' decision to leave their home country, *"it is the variation in pull factors that is widely seen as determining the direction of mobility"* (Thielemann, 2012, p. 25). In this vein, de Hass (2007) suggests that push and pull factors have different effects on social groups and may, sometimes, provoke contradictory reactions.

Based on the literature cited above, I argue that push factors will only operate in a meaningful way and influence decision-making depending on the educational aspirations of individual students as well as the family, economic and political context at play. It does not seem that there is one overriding push factor that determine student mobility direction but, instead, that a combination of push factors plays a role. I further submit that it is not possible for strong pull factors operating in their own right to influence the mobility decisions of international students but that there must be an initial interest and willingness on the part of the student to study abroad. It is the individual

students' interest, informed by their professional aspirations and expectations, that drive them to analyse the domestic education system, search for information on prospective countries and academic institutions, analyse current family financial capacity, among others, that form the basis upon which all other decisions are made.

## **2.8. Pull Factors that Attract International Students to a Destination Country Abroad**

This section examines specific literature that focuses on the factors that scholars have investigated in an effort to illuminate the diverse contexts of and reasons for international students' choice of a destination country. The main argument posited is that there is no one key pull factor that may be said to explain international students' choice of a destination country but, instead, that a multiplicity of factors come into play in different contexts and which influence the mobility of global students. Scholars have delved into this argument with one such scholar, Park (2009) referring to pull factors as the directional factor which relates to the students' perceptions of images and expectations in relation to foreign higher education and which may influence the directional decisions of the destination country. In his view, students who have decided to study abroad engage in a comparative analysis of potential receiving countries and then make a choice on where to study. This process involves obtaining information from the official websites and the media, for example, information on student visa processing, ease or difficulty of admission to the university, education landscape, together with an impression of the political and economic conditions in the country. This information then makes up the mental view, impression and anticipation that students develop about the country and the universities they intend to choose. This view confirms the work by Knight (2004, 2008; Park, 2009) and Amaral, Tavares, Cardoso, and Sin (2016), who argue that, depending on its strategic focus (sending/exporting or receiving/importing), as government sets out the policy and regulatory frameworks to operationalise its internationalisation agenda, it creates an impression of the country and this in turn guides the students' choice and, hence, their decisions on their mobility direction. On this point, Jowi (2009), Findlay (2010) and Sehoole (2011) contend that, globally, many countries and higher education institutions are active participants in determining the flow of international students as a result of the application of diverse policy and regulatory options. However, depending on the degree of perceived or real uncertainty and risk that international students may pose, a country may impose regulations that impose numerous limitations on inbound students. As, indeed, Naples (2009) observed, while capital, as a factor of production, may be moved freely across national boundaries, humans, as a



resource, are subject to scrutiny at border and immigration control points to regulate their movements. In light of the literature cited above, I submit that being an international student does not discount the possibility of engaging in risky and illicit trade or security manoeuvres. I, therefore, contend that it is incumbent on higher education institutions and governments to guarantee the security of both nationals and international students in an education setup. In any case, students from different countries have various motivations and attitudes (Wilkins et al., 2012) and this requires the application of government machinery to monitor such diverse motives and attitudes.

Scholars have investigated international students' view of pull factors into countries of different destinations. Some scholars have coined attractive terms to refer to pull factors. One such terminology is: '*magnets of opportunities*' (Schoole, 2011, p. 54) which, among others, include granting visas for inward-bound students; arranging inter-governmental agreements to facilitate the exchange of students; the availability of study opportunities in other countries; and availability of scholarships for international students. OECD (2011) and Maringe and Carter (2007) point to historical connections, language of instruction and the education system as important factors in the choice of the destination country. Zhukovskyi and Simak (2015) established the availability of government and institutional grants/scholarships, together with temporary employment available for up to 20 hours per week without having to apply for open work permits, as pull factors. In addition, Perkins and Neumayer (2014) and Singh (2016) conclude that favourable economic conditions characterised by better salaries, career prospects and standards of living attract international students who intend to migrate after their studies and find employment. It has been found that the ease and speed of processing visas to Canada were key pull factor in respect of Chinese students' choice of Canada as a destination country (Chen, 2007). Similarly, positive experiences on the part of their friends, favourable political and social environments, the availability of advanced research facilities and the prospect of having multinational classmates are all factors that encourage mobility into a country. Denman and Hilal (2011) present choice factors as including the availability of a wide range of national museums, music and theatres, easy access to beautiful and varied countryside, safety of the country in which to live, and faith and worship facilities similar to those in their home country. Abuosi and Abor (2015) identify the creation of networks and opportunities for career progression as pull factors while Kaur, Singh, Schapper, and Jack (2014) and Thielemann (2012) cited the proximity of the university and/or the country to the

students' home, the sense of sharing the same culture and language, affordable tuition fees, and safety with relatively low risk as pull factors. Similarly, Park (2009), González, Mesanza, and Mariel (2011) and Kahanec and Králiková (2011, p. 5) identified higher education institutions with a high Shanghai Ranking, coupled with a good climate in the destination country, as significant pull factors for international students. On the other hand, Zhukovskyi and Simak (2015), Van Mol and Timmermann (2014), Bodvarsson and Van de Berg (2013) and Beine et al. (2013) concur that family and friendship ties (kinship network) and a community of earlier migrants from a similar ethnic background (migrant network) pull students to their destination country. However, Abuosi and Abor (2014) found that, even without having relatives and friends in destination countries, some nursing students were ready to take a risk and migrate to the UK when knowing they would navigate life in a turbulent new environment. The cited literature is not any different from the reasons international students adduce for their choice of Uganda even when the context of the studies is different.

While scholars such as Mazzarol and Soutar (2002), Cubillo, Sanchez, and Cervino (2006), Park (2009), Kahanec and Králiková (2011) and Zhukovskyi and Simak (2015), among others, established that pull factors influence international students' choice of destination country other scholars have also shown that it is not always one way pull factors that influence such decisions. For example, Li and Bray (2007) argue that home countries and institutions do not only represent negative forces that push some students abroad but that they may also represent positive forces that persuade students to study in their home countries. Park (2009) supports this argument with his assertion that students who contented with the domestic education are not inspired to study abroad as compared to those who are disgruntled with the domestic system of education. In effect, international students' decision to study abroad depends on an interplay between the internal (home country) and external (destination country) forces – also termed two way push-pull factors (Li and Bray, 2007) – which are not static but dynamic (Cheung & Xu, 2014). Similarly, Wilkins and Huisman (2011) present a reverse Push 2-Pull 2 model which incorporates two distinct sets of push and pull factors with one operating from within the home universities and the other on the international university campuses. Implicit in their Push 2 –Pull 2 framework is the existence of varying levels of both push and pull forces at play in both the home and the destination universities. Based on this frame work, I would argue that international students' choices of MAK and KIU, as

based on different motivations and needs, were informed by the strong push educational factors specific to the education system and the universities in the home countries and the equally strong pull factors of Uganda and Universities they chose. It is argued that negative factors in the home country have more influence on international students' decision to relocate to Uganda whereas diverse positive factors attracted them to Uganda. In line with this discussion, Zhukovskyi and Simak (2015) contend that a combination of push and pull factors determines the size and direction of flows while Wilkins and Huisman (2011a) indicate that 'push' factors now have considerably less influence over a student's decision-making than the 'pull' factors.

### **Summary**

The discussion above illuminated that, in order to understand the pull factors that international students consider in connection with choice of a specific country, it is essential to take into account the individual factors that inform their choice of destination country. The literature review highlighted a number of factors including, among others: the age and interests of the international student; the influence of the parents; the destination country image of education system, its socioeconomic conditions, the actual and perceived risks in the country; its political environment and internal stability; the cost of living; the employment opportunities available; the presence of earlier migrants from the home country; the immigration policies of the destination country; opportunity for scholarship offers /grants and training. It is, thus, clear that there is no single factor that may be said to be applicable to all international students in their individual choice of destination country. Each international student operates within a certain context that guides his/her decision to study abroad and the direction.

## **2.9. Pull Factors Motivating International Students' Choice of a Particular Institution**

### **Abroad**

The global student market has become more competitive than ever before and HEIs are under pressure to improve their product if they are to remain relevant and attract students. Rizvi (2011) argues that, to attain this relevance, most established systems of higher education have developed their own policies and specific strategies to address the internationalisation of higher education. Recognising that higher institutions of learning are active participants in determining the flow of international students, as alluded to by Jowi (2009), Findlay (2010) and Sehoole (2011), Maringe (2006) suggests that, within this global student market, institutions compete for the academically

intelligent students while the applicants compete for the most desired institutions. Farjam and Hongyi (2015) posit that it is obvious that, as a result of new technology and the internet, students have more access than ever before to information on the various programmes presented by different universities around the world. Following on this assertion, Morrish and Guo (2011) contend that it is important for international higher education service providers to understand the way in which international students evaluate and choose institutions or universities at which to study. This is in line with Wilkins and Huisman's (2011) postulation that international students' and, specifically, postgraduate students' choice of country and institution is greatly influenced by the reputation and ranking of higher education institutions as well as the recommendations they receive from alumni with experience of higher education overseas. Contributing to the debate, Petruzzellis and Romanazzi (2010) argue that, in their choice of university, students are more concerned about being successful in their studies than about the image of the institution. They further opine that students' choice of university may be categorised into two dimensions, namely, university-related factors or student-related ones.

Students as rational human beings undertake information search about institutions and make their choices based on a number of considerations. Their actions are guided by the desire to achieve their academic goals and therefore *'from a rational choice perspective, students compare all possible universities and choose the institution and study programme that fit their needs'* (Sá, Florax, and Rietveld, 2004, pp. 379–381) and offer value for the financial investment in education (Petruzzellis & Romanazzi, 2010, p. 143). In addition, Chen (2007) and Li and Bray (2007) found that institutional characteristics as well as academic and administrative pulling factors rank highly in importance in attracting East Asian students to Canadian universities. The factors which were identified as to have influence the students' choices included the university's reputation; the quality and ranking of the academic programmes; the availability of unique programmes and courses offered; the opportunity to engage in positive interaction with faculty and staff; the location of the university in the metropolitan city; safety and non-discrimination; tolerance and a feeling of being accepted in the university. Similarly, Zhukovskyi and Simak (2015) and OECD (2012) point out that international students are attracted to an institution which they know offers substantial student support services through the international students' office that provides a range of programmes and services, such as information and assistance with housing, and the availability of financial

assistance in the form of fellowships to academically outstanding students. Furthermore, small class sizes, successful athletic programmes, a diversity of courses (Sá et al., 2004, p. 387); the existence of particular programmes (Welch, 2002), perceived quality of teaching judged in terms of the student-teacher ratio, specialisations, individual professors' supervisory load (Li & Bray, 2007; Wei, 2013) and language of instruction (OECD, 2011) are other considerations that draw international students to study at particular universities.

In addition, Tan and Goh (2014) and Othieno and Nampewo (2012) expressed the view that low tuition fees and cultural compatibility are major factors that influence the enrolment trend of international postgraduate students at a university. Tied to these factors is the importance of the world university ranking which provides an indication of both its prestige and quality explicit (Beine et al., 2013; Rizvi, 2011). In line with this debate, Nayyar (2007) argues that parents and students prefer the popularity and availability of courses offered by a university that make young people employable. Ogachi (2009) argued that Kenyan students continue to choose Ugandan universities because of the flexible but lower admission requirements for courses (Law, Medicine, Pharmacy and Finance) for which they are not able to enrol locally, low tuition fees and the perception among students that, rather than enrol at the branch institutions established in their home country, they would rather cross the border to study in the same institutions in Uganda where they also have social connections.

On this note, Brown, Varley, and Pal (2009) posit that the preference for a students' social network is considered as a risk-reduction strategy in relation to the students' decision-making process. However, Braimah's (2014) study of nurses conducted in Ghana did not find the influence of a social network to be one of the factors that international students considered when selecting a university at which to study in Ghana. This finding contradicts those of studies conducted by Zhukovskyi and Simak (2015) argued that social reference groups affect the type of university a prospective student will select. This contradiction in findings may be explained by factors related to the fact that the Braimah's study was conducted in an African context where students tend to come from almost the same cultural environment with cross-border migrations and marriages which may have created a strong social network that supports international students from neighbouring countries. In short, it is clear from the literature cited above that the factors that influence international students' choice of education institution are not universal in nature but are,

instead, based on the unique needs and expectations of each student, existing institutional uniqueness, opportunities and potential with these factors affecting their choices. It may be observed that both university and personal based factors work in tandem to inform the students' study choice direction.

## **2.10. International Students' Experience**

This study adopted the conceptualisation of experiences as "*students' perceptions of the way in which they are treated as well as the difficulties they encounter during their studies in the destination countries*" (Cantwell et al., 2009, p. 343). Amy et al. (2010) assert that there is a limited amount of literature addressing the complexities of the international students' experience while Brown and Holloway (2008) argue that relocating to a new environment is one of the most challenging experiences of a person's life. Upon reaching their destination countries and institutions, international students are exposed to a new environment, new people, new cultures and norms, new systems and processes, and new laws and regulations with which they must learn to cope – an undertaking which is dynamic, complex and challenging Sherry et al., 2010; Tran, 2011). Petruzzellis and Romanazzi (2010) are of the view that the total university experience is greatly influenced by both the students' academic life and their social life outside of campus. This involves an analysis of the broader services offered by the university community as well as the individual student effort during the entire study period to attain reasonable experience.

### **2.10.1. Academic Experiences**

The context of academic experiences of international students may differ with these experiences starting early in their academic lives when they were young (Gargano, 2009). In the same vein, Fernex, Lima, and de Vries (2015) and Sheridan (2011) found that even before international students enrol at a foreign university, they already have a well-developed academic culture and entrenched experiences from their previous academic institutions and, thus, they come with these experiences. Sheridan (2011) maintains that such academic history includes conceptual knowledge and skills, linguistic capacity, how the students speak, educational achievements and social networking skills. In other words, this academic history comprises personal, social and academic components. The academic experiences of international students may be placed in two categories, namely, positive and negative experiences. In line with this categorisation, in their study conducted in Taiwan, Roberts et al. (2010) found that learning a new language first hand, experience of life outside home country, making new friends, exposure to a different ethos, prospects of becoming

an international native, and becoming more mature and independent were perceived as exciting positive experiences by international students. Huang (2008) reported that international students benefited from their overall course and the learning support services offered, including writing an academic work (a dissertation). Huang further maintained that international students acknowledged the instrumental support from their colleagues during the whole study abroad project. I posit that positive experiences are a product of a supporting teaching and learning environment, available infrastructures and accessible academic facilities that enhance the individual's knowledge search and guided learning. Similarly, when the students are well integrated into and have adopted the academic culture and discourse in the discipline in which they are studying positive experiences are shared amongst themselves. This presupposes that, on the social front, the learning process is supported by the networks the student developed along the way.

Lea and Street (2006), cited in Sheridan (2011) present the following three perspectives of academic experiences, namely, study skills, academic socialisation and academic literacy, to get understand the perspectives of student's experience. Their literary work was adopted as a guide in the reflection on the international students' academic experiences as they specific to this study. In relation to study skills, Son and Park (2014) and Durkin (2008) found that, in general, international students lacked the skills required for writing academic research and pointed especially to difficulty in identifying a research gap, and reviewing the literature. Similarly, they found challenges in regard to competence in the use of data analysis software, limited critical thinking ability, deficient use of appropriate references as well as problems satisfying essay requirements – all important skills in academic success. However, Huang (2007) found that frequent exposure to writing practice assisted international students to acquire dissertation writing skills. Lea and Street (2006) argue that literacy and writing is an individual intellectual activity in which sentence structure, creating a paragraph and punctuations are learnt and applied in different contexts. I support this position and argue that students acquire critical reading, thinking and writing skills through both continuous individual and small group assignments assessed by facilitators as well as feedback given over the entire study period. However, I am also of the view that these skills may only be attained in an active learning environment in which questions are given as assignments in which the students must provide solutions. In order to do this they must engage in self-reading, gain an understanding of the relevant concepts/theories and, through reasoning, think through the solutions required in the assignment on their own and, in the process, acquire the study

skills they need. This skills development process may effectively occur when learners commit their time to the learning activities but with facilitators who embrace student-centred techniques of teaching and learning (Burkhalter & Shegebayev, 2012).

From another perspective, the academic socialisation which takes place during the learning process presents a more complex view through which the academic experiences of international students are attained. Its major dimensions include the following: knowledge is a social construct and, therefore, it is acquired during interaction with others and writing is a process of acculturation into a community of practitioners in a particular discipline. In essence, a student attains the discourse practices, that is, the spoken and written discourse and the approved expression of thought in a discipline or subject, thus implying that the student learns the underlying rule which governs such discourse. Burkhalter and Shegebayev (2012) posits that ensuring a student-centred classroom in which the ideas produced by learners are used as classroom tools for debate empowers and motivates the students. Altinyelken (2011) maintains that student-centred learning is both involving and egalitarian; and is attained through debate, various reflective writing activities, group work and interactive games, etc. Dimmock and Leong (2010) alluded to international students experiencing difficulties in changing over from teacher-centred to student-centred learning in a new learning environment. However, I am of the view that, while this challenge is real, sharing in classroom discussion and listening to the differing arguments put forward by other students as they challenge one another opens up the international students' horizon of thinking and understanding, helps them to organise independent thoughts and to analyse as well as to develop a global view of the concepts. I submit further that group discussions inculcate in the students the ability to organise themselves in teams for a specific project and to learn both to adopt the common position in the groups and, where disagreement arises in discussion and also how to manage views which are divergent from those of team members – a skill which is applicable and relevant within the work place. Moreover, presentation in plenary after group discussions enhances their ability to deliver a researched output as a team but also to gain confidence in talking within a community of intellectuals in the same discipline.

Applying the academic literacy perspective in understanding the academic experience of students, I hold the view those institutions of learning plays a significant part in imparting reading and writing skills that is applied in the latter stages of scholarly engagements. Sheridan (2011) argues



that academic literacy is about the students' overall engagement with all levels at the university and, therefore, this affects the totality of their experience in terms of their academic, social and emotional well-being. Passarella and Terenzini (2005) contend that peers, faculty, and administrators are all influential factors that contribute to the international students' academic experience with Pithouse-Morgan et al. (2012) echoing the view that a university campus is a setting in which the intrinsic and influential component of the student's experience takes place. In other words, students learn from their total environment and not just the classroom. However, when a student's daily life on campus is fraught with fear and unease Pithouse-Morgan et al., (2012) then the learning environment is not encouraging and the student's learning experience is not enjoyable. Sheridan (2011) notes that, as a result of their weakness in relation to communicative interaction, international students often find difficulty to make friends beyond the superficial level while their participation in both the academic and social life on the campus is limited, thus compromising their opportunity to fully develop their academic literacy. Scott, Safdar, Desai, and El Masri (2015) alluded to international students experiencing differences in the delivery of lessons as compared to lesson delivery to which they were accustomed to in their home countries. In their study, Kenway and Bullen (2003) reported class-based prejudice, including different approaches used by supervisors in communicating with local and international students and, sometimes, the international students feeling they were down upon by their supervisors in cases of misunderstanding.

Meanwhile, Brauss, Lin, and Baker (2015) found that international students underachieved in verbal as opposed to written language abilities with this giving rise to challenges during learning. Khawaja and Stallman (2011) and Song-ee-Ahn (2011) observed that limited English language proficiency diminishes the international students' command of the taught content in the classroom, slowing down their speech and confidence and leading to academic stress (Huang, 2008; Khawaja & Stallman, 2011; Phakiti & Li, 2011). Ackahand and Kuranchie (2015) contend that international students struggle to become accustomed to academic rules and regulations and adjusting to the new academic environment while Sherry et al. (2010) stressed that learners have to make the adjustment from their own deep rooted academic cultures, patterns, behaviours and systems and adopt the norms and habits of the new academic environment on their own.

In short, it is clear that academic experiences are context specific and individual in nature, occurring through all levels of the academic journey, starting from the time of admission until

graduation. These experiences reflect the quality and level of the interaction between and among the learners, and the learners and the academic and non-academic staff within an academic environment and guided by the curriculum delivered. These experiences may be said to be a reflection of the level of awareness of the university internationalisation agenda on the part of the staff and their knowledge as to how to meet the unique need of international students. Positive experiences probably indicate high competency levels among university staff and the application of the right approaches when dealing with international students while negative experiences would suggest that contrary and inappropriate approaches were applied in relating to international students with such approaches sowing dissatisfaction among them.

### **2.10.2 Socio-cultural Experiences**

International students who study abroad usually come from a well-entrenched domestic culture but are expected to adjust to the culture in the destination country. According to Sherry et al. (2010, pp. 38–39), assimilation in a new environment is challenging and calls for social connectedness if international students are integrate successfully. Smith and Demjanenko (2011) contend that, despite the adaptation processes that take place to enable the student to cope in the new environment, the student, as an individual, does not undergo a complete metamorphosis into a new cultural being and totally different from his/her cultural distinctness acquired in the home country during the growth process. For example, Townsend and Poh (2008, p. 253) found that students experienced difficulties in adjusting to, local social settings, access to and use of an unfamiliar language, among others. They further argued that a new environment breeds feelings of isolation, results in the disruption of the known way of life and fosters perceptions of oneself as a stranger in the culture of the destination country. Similarly, Sherry et al. (2010, pp. 39–40) observed that some of the cultural and religious values which international students hold in high esteem may not be properly recognised in the new country, for example the Muslim international students observed that their religious and cultural concerns are often poorly addressed with a lack of prayer facilities for their daily prayers, no service providers to deliver their traditional food (halal) and their religious festivals, such as the fasting season (Ramadan), often go unnoticed by the university management. In respect of the issue of food, Dovey, Staples, Gibson, and Halford (2008) found that food neophobia may be problematic and even impact negatively on students' diet and health while eating food from home helps to alleviate sickness (Meza & Gazzoli, 2011). In addition, it is important to note that eating food in the company of students from the home country enhances

social facilitation (Edwards, 2013, p. 227). In view of their being strangers in a new environment, it is argued that such a welcoming community coupled with the students own personality character greatly contributes to the international student's adjustment process' However, it is essential that the international students are active in this process.

While the supportive campus environment, as alluded to by Hwang et al. (2011), is necessary for a positive campus experience, Pithouse-Morgan et al. (2012) found that that international students has had xenophobic experiences on university campuses in South Africa with these experiences including intended actions which include physical violence, isolation and emotional stress that causes suffering, feelings of belittlement as well as feelings of uncertainty resulting in a fear of free movement merely as a result of being a foreigner living and studying in South Africa. However, despite evidence of the experiences of fear South Africa as scholarly work indicated, the extent of fear to which international students are exposed may not be the case in other contexts in other countries although there was a need for the international students to develop a social and cultural capital to cope with life in a new environment. Russell, Rosenthal and Thomson (2010) maintain that, in order to achieve sociocultural adjustment, it is imperative that international students adopt a person-focused approach and copying strategies in responding psychologically to their host environment. The above findings are in agreement with the findings of an earlier study by Koehne (2006) that, as a survival mechanism to assimilate well into the new environment, international students adopts approaches each student applies to cope in the new environment. Based on the comparison made of findings from Resell et al(2010) and Koehene (2016) I maintain that working together the international students devise plans to support one another by integrating new methods of acting/living. One such strategy alluded to by Özturgut and Murphy (2009) was that, to integrate well into the new environment in American universities, international students had to master both formal and informal English for everyday and academic life. This resonates with the findings of Sherry et al. (2010) and Kenway and Bullen (2003) that, as a result of the racism they experienced, international students tended mainly to befriend each other and to socialise with other international students as a practical survival strategy although a few international students did have local students as their friends with whom they attended Bible studies, played sports, shopped and attended family dinners on invitation.

Based on the literature cited above, it may be argued that a socio-cultural network is a key component of the study abroad experiences of international students. Waterfield and Whelan

(2017, p. 997) identify social-cultural capital as an important source of the information that international students require in any aspect of their study abroad. However, I argue that, while this may be the case, not all international students have the opportunity to enjoy the social cultural contacts and connections from which they draw inspiration and guidance to navigate their life experiences in the host country. I contend that, for international students with connections in the destination country from which they may obtain instrumental and financial help, integration into the life patterns and systems is much easier than for their counterparts without such connections. In other words, international students without connections on which to fall back in the study country find life extremely challenging although, in general, they manage to navigate life in the new environment. Thus, I am of the opinion that, in this new environment, the students' personality and approach to life greatly determines the social responses and approaches deployed by other students and the local communities in which they live.

### **2.10.3. Economic Experiences**

The international students' choice of a country and institution is related to the cost of education, including the cost of living. This view aligns with Odebero (2011, 2015) and Ogachi (2009) observation that, for many years, the cross-border movements in search of higher education between the countries in the East African Community (EAC) have been unequal but in Uganda's favour for a number of reasons, including the low tuition fees charged and favourable affordable of living . Informed by this reality, students, especially those from poorer economic backgrounds, choose the study country and institution of learning with a hope of securing paid employment to supplement their financial needs (Woodhall, 2004) which impact adversely on the time they are able to allocate to their academic goals. While this may be the case with students from poor financial backgrounds, Fernex et al. (2015, p. 402) express the view that students from families with higher incomes, who are able to meet the costs of higher education institution and the students' daily living expenses, may have less need to find paid work during their studies. This financial capacity then influence how they apportion their time for their academic studies and which is not the same as the way in international students from financially poor backgrounds are often forced to apportion their time. It is, thus, assumed that, for as long as the student from a poor economic background invests his/her time in part-time paid employment in anticipation of receiving a salary, they will have less time to allocate to their academic work. This assumption is in line with the observation of Stevens and Weale (2004), cited in Fernex et al., (2015, p. 403),

study time declines when the anticipated employment gains are high, namely, the higher the expectations, the less time students allocate to study. This assertion is in line with earlier work by (Woodhall, 2004) which indicated that the majority of international students who are self-funded face serious economic problems, sometimes resulting in an interruption of their studies, part-time work, health difficulties, and the failure to complete their degrees, among other experiences. Sherry et al. (2010) reported financial vulnerability in regard to the payment of higher fees as compared to local students, the high cost of health insurance for international students which must be paid on an annual basis even when no service are accessed, and the high cost of text books. In their study conducted in Ghana, Ackah and Kuranchie (2015, p. 403) indicated that international students often face challenges in opening up bank accounts and learning the local currency (the Ghanaian Cedi), its incessant fluctuations and the unstable prices of commodities which render the value of the money remitted to them worthless.

International students report that the increase in commodity prices, as a result of inflation, results in an inevitable increase in their demands for money from their parents which raises parental doubts occasioned by their inconsistent monthly financial demands. It has been observed that, when such financial challenges occur, international students have no one to whom to turn for help other than the support that comes from their home country sources. Waterfield and Whelan (2017) found that economic capital facilitates the international student's access to good accommodation and private support services as the need arises in the host country. However, I am still of the view that it is the international students who are from families with strong economic backgrounds that are able to afford high class accommodation and private services in the destination country while the students from a poor economic background lack the capacity to access the necessary facilities, including the good accommodation and private services that would enable them to live comfortably in a foreign country. It is further argued that, due to their limited economic ability, international students from such families experience self-imposed isolation from their colleagues. In addition, they experience the stigma associated with their inability to meet their financial requirements, for example, failing to pay tuition fees and having to seek help from fellow students.

### **2.11. Summary of Literature**

Based on the literature presented, it was observed that international student mobility is not a new phenomenon in the world and its future is still vibrant. It is happening within and across the continents with governments now taking the lead in designing appropriate legal, policy and

institutional structures to regulate its occurrence. The interplay of push and pull factors and the strength of each determine the mobility direction. Universities are active players in the recruitment of international students through their internationalisation agendas. Due to the high costs of education in the original destination countries of Europe and North America, families with financial capacity are now sending their children to other countries within their geographical regions to access quality higher education in the countries they consider to offer better education as compared to that offered in their home countries. Upon enrolling at such educational institutions, international students whose academic experiences come from their interaction with the education system in their home countries, must adopt to the new academic requirement in the new country. As they interact with the new education system international students undergo diverse academic experiences, starting with the admission processes and proceeding to the teaching and learning engagement in class, experiences with student-faculty relationships, and the management of coursework, test and examination results. In relation to their socio-cultural experiences, international students face challenges with their integration into the community even if they have been exposed to diverse cultures and traditions in their country of origin. International students often experience financial vulnerability in respect to the payment of their tuition as well as challenges of limited access to appropriate accommodation and meeting their daily needs.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Methodology of the Study**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter discusses the philosophical foundation underpinning the study; the research methodology used in the study; the research design which was adopted and applied to the study; the choice of research institutions and justifications for this choice; the sampling procedures used and sample size selection. This is followed by a discussion on the approaches used in the collection of the requisite data, the type of data collected, and the way in which the data was analysed and presented. The last section in the chapter presents the quality measures and ethical considerations applied in the study.

#### **3.2. Philosophical Rooting of the Study**

According to Cohen et al. (2000, cited in Tuli, (2010), researchers are independently grounded in world views/paradigms that inform their assumptions of the nature of reality and what they consider to be knowledge. Mack (2010) contends further that ontological and epistemological assumptions together form the basis of a researcher's paradigm. A paradigm is defined as a set of assumptions and mental views within a research domain that are common to a group of people while Denzin & Lincoln (2005) describes a paradigm as the fulcrum point that holds the epistemological, ontological and methodological foundations of an investigator. In light of this postulation, Ward, Hoare, and Gott (2016, p. 449) that, when researchers state their epistemological stance, this provides clarity to their world view and justifies their choice of the methodology applicable to the study. Furthermore, Mertens (2010, p. 469) contends that paradigms help to illuminate the investigator's beliefs about ethics, reality, knowledge and methodology.

The pragmatist research paradigm was chosen as the philosophical foundation for the purposes of this study. Creswell (2014) and Alise and Teddlie (2010) contend that researchers who use a pragmatic paradigm are not tied to any one philosophy or reality in their research activities. My worldview, as framed through a pragmatic lens on ontology and epistemology, influenced the choice of both the research methodology and the research methods used in the study. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) conceptualise ontology as what is believed to be actual or real. It may be stated that ontology relates to an individual's assumptions and claims in respect of what constitutes the nature of social reality or presence, its definition, how it presents itself and how these dimensions

interact. In principle, ontology is about what we mean when we claim the existence of some phenomenon, thus implying that “researches declare their view on how things really are and how things really work” (Scotland, 2010, p. 9). For example, for this study this was about how international student mobility happens and reflecting on how their lived experience occurs.

In the effort to understand how international student’s mobility happens, the interpretivist/constructivist ontological assumptions guided the conceptualisation of the existence of the pull and push factors and the lived experiences of international students in Uganda. I hold the view that international students engage in personal interpretations of what they observe, hear and feel with regard to the academic and social life processes that they encounter. In order to place it to context and conceptualise the nature of social reality, Mason (2002), cited in Howe, (2015, p. 7), suggests the specific ontological characteristics that international students observe and interpret, namely, the people, groups, issues, social processes and institutions with which they engage as they make meaning of their life experiences during their stay in a country. Given that international students come from different countries and backgrounds, their concept of reality is conditioned by their age, professional interest, earlier social beliefs and academic exposure and, thus, their interpretations cannot be similar, hence laying the groundwork for the multiple perspectives and subjectivity in their interpretation.

Tuli (2010) asserts that a *constructivist ontology* believes in multiple, individual or socially constructed realities and that both the researcher and the participants have the capacity to create meaning holistically, independent of each other but within a given context. In this regard, the international students who participated in this study, in response to the survey and the interview questions, conceptualised, digested, reflected on and provided the responses that they considered as meaningful based on their lived experiences. Applying the constructive ontological stance to the pull and push factors and their lived experience, the individual international students who participated in the survey and in-depth interviews, through their interpretive lens, constructed meaning from their interaction with the immediate natural environment in what they considered to be the lived academic and social reality in their Ugandan experiences. I do not subscribe to the view that reality is positioned somewhere to be physically seen and that it is objective in nature but, instead, I subscribe to the view that reality is socially constructed through personal experiences with people and the environment in which they live, and that people make meaning from their



interactions within a bound context. Similarly, as a researcher and applying the interpretive lens in the data collection and data analysis processes, meaning was crafted, as is reflected in the findings of the study (Chapter four). The difference in meaning, as derived by the students and the researchers, aligns with Nicholls' (2017) assertion that there exist multiple realities in studies that apply qualitative methodologies – the methodology used in this study. In the light of this consideration, cognisance was taken of the fact that the international students' reality may not necessarily have been the same as that of the researcher, a view shared by Schoonenboom (2017), who posits that the reality as conceived by a study population does occasionally differs from that of the researcher.

Denzin and Lincoln (2000, p. 16) highlight the concept of epistemology and refer to it as the nature of the interaction that exists between the inquirer and the known issue. The epistemological stance analyses how an inquirer knows what he/she claims to know and hence, it is a view of how a researcher acquires the knowledge that he/she claims to have about something. In principle, it looks at the researcher's worldview that guides the process of knowledge acquisition. In this regard, the *interpretivist/constructivist, epistemological* stance guided the process of acquiring knowledge about the pull and push factors and the lived experiences in relation to international students in Uganda, taking into account the individual nature of the application, admission, registration, academic and social life processes as experienced by an international student in Uganda. In this case, the knowledge that the international students had acquired through living in Uganda and studying at the University of their Choice was deemed to be their knowledge and personal to the individual and thus they were in the best position to explain it, hence the rationale for the adoption of the interpretivist constructivist epistemology. According to this paradigm, that which constitutes social reality and making sense out of the context in which one lives require an audit of one's level of social connectedness. This is in line with the qualitative research framework that observes people's interaction and considers that individuals form their own knowledge during such interaction and also that they discuss and interpret knowledge differently based on their individual experience within the community in question (Maxwell, 2006). The choice and application of an interpretivist constructivist epistemology for the purposes of this study was based on multiple reasons.

Firstly, the aim of the study was to gain an inner view and understanding of international students' experiences within a natural setting at their institutions of learning; secondly, it was to ascertain the meaning they attached to the social connections they had created; thirdly, it was to obtain actual information within a "real" global environment in the Ugandan context, fourthly, it was to encourage international students to speak freely as participants in the knowledge creation process but not as an object of study as would have been the case in a purely quantitative study, and, lastly, to engage appropriate data collection methods and instruments for the purposes of the study. Encouraging free speech and the application of data collection methods and instruments that were deemed to be appropriate to both the study participants and the study as a whole resulted in rich and detailed data. This is in line with Tuli's (2010) assertion that studies involving qualitative methodologies result in both quality data descriptions from the one-on-one in-depth interviews and a deeper impression of the context of the study than may otherwise have been the case. Through the above processes, the researcher managed to gain a deep insight into the meaning that international students attach to the world around them in a natural setting (Uganda and the university of their choice).

In view of the fact that a research study may apply deductive reasoning informed by an existing theory and scientific observation of individual behaviours specific to an issue (Tuli, 2010), this study adopted the *positivist epistemology* approach in the effort to derive knowledge from the international students' pattern of responses relevant to the research questions as based on their claims of lived experiences. An online survey questionnaire with highly standardised questions was used to obtain descriptive statistical data from MAK and KIU. Based on the results of the survey questionnaire patterns of responses were analysed and correlations determined. While the findings of this study are specific to MAK and KIU and not intended to enable to make generalisations about international students in Uganda, it is, nevertheless, possible that the pattern of responses/findings may be used to lay claim to or predict the nature and form of international student mobility in Uganda.

### **3.3. Research Design and its Justification**

A research design is a blueprint for the research which an interested person would conduct in doing the same study for the purposes of validating the findings of a completed study. My conceptualisation of reality and how knowledge is created gave legitimacy to the application of

mixed methods and the adoption of different worldviews and assumptions as well as varying approaches to the data collection and data analysis. This study adopted an explanatory, sequential, mixed methods, case study approach that systematically combined aspects of quantitative and qualitative research methods (Creswell, 2014 Briggs, Coleman, & Morrison, 2014). The design was adopted based on a number of considerations derived from the literature consulted. For example, Creswell (2014) reasons that the case study design is the most appropriate when a researcher desires to understand a particular phenomenon and must intensively examine a programme, event, activity, process, a person or persons when conducting students' research and when data collection may be conducted over a long period. Yin (1989) further conceptualises a case to be an activity, an event, an entity, an individual or a unit of analysis. For this study, the units of analysis were the international students and the case of MAK and KIU. Lorraine et al. (2011, p. 12) add that a case study design is appropriate when "a problem or issue needs to be explored, and when there is need to hear silenced voices by talking directly with people". This study on pull-push factors and international student experiences in Uganda within the settings of two universities was designed to hear the students' unheard voices, engage directly with them and gain a deeper understanding of their lived experiences.

The relevance of applying a case study design was informed by the desire to investigate the real-life experience of international students while it was also recognised that international students' opinions about their experiences are not fixed but change over time owing to occurrences within their surroundings. The case study research design was also considered appropriate because it offered an opportunity to apply multiple methods of data collection to order to collect the requisite information from respondents with rich information (Mohd & Noor, 2008) as well as allowing the use of open-ended questions in the interests of acquiring in-depth understanding about the research phenomenon (Kumar, 2011). It was also adopted because of the intended study was an empirical study conducted in a natural setting that offered the investigator a comprehensive view of the subject under study; and in view of its capacity to uncover the relevant activities and issues affecting the lives of the people in the entity under study as a case (Mohd Noor, 2008). However, I remained conscious of the criticisms levied against the case study research design. For example, Gummesson (1991), cited in Mohd Noor (2008, p. 1603), claims that the use of a case study implies less rigour in the research process, concerns of reliability are not addressed and it is not possible to generalise the findings. However, the criticism notwithstanding, I considered that the

benefits of a case study in relation to the acquisition of a deeper understanding of a specific phenomenon of a contemporary nature are pronounced. Thus, the benefits of the use of the case study meant the extent of its limitations did not discount its application in this study.

According to Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004), “*words provide meaning to figures and numbers do provide precision to words*”. This argument, which is reflective of a mixed methods study, was deemed to be applicable and relevant to the answers that were provided to the research question and which expanded existing knowledge through the enriched new findings on international student mobility experiences in the Ugandan context. The mixed research design was considered to be the most appropriate to this study and was adopted for this study because of its capacity to enhance the quality of the research process and the research findings (Briggs et al., 2014, pp. 124–128) and also because of its ability to use findings from one study to support or validate the findings which arise from another approach (Azorín & Gamero, 2014, p. 138). In addition, the decision was based on the ability of a case study to answer the “how” and “why” questions in a study that involves a contemporary phenomenon, as was the case with student mobility in this study. The fact that achieving a deeper understanding of the student mobility phenomenon required “*both numerical and text data*” (Maree, 2014, p. 270) justified the application of a mixed method research design in this study. Accordingly, both text and numerical data was collected and analysed in the same study and the results provided an enhanced understanding of international students’ experiences in Uganda as compared to a situation in which either purely quantitative or qualitative approaches had been applied (Bazeley, 2010). The desire to obtain comprehensive answers in this study justified the interaction of different data collection approaches (Siddiqui & Fitzgerald, 2014) in order to gain deeper insights into international students’ push-pull factors and lived experiences in Uganda. Given that it is not possible to discover lived experiences in a strict mathematical pattern derived from the use of short questions and answers predetermined on a Likert scale, it was deemed inappropriate to use only the quantitative design in this study which aimed to gather rich and complete descriptions of personal experiences (Polkinghorne, 2005, p. 138). Thus, this justified the application of a mixed methods design. With regard to the quantitative aspects of the study, the purpose was to determine how different aspects played out with respect to international students’ choice of Uganda and of a particular institution, and their lived experiences.

### **3.3.1. Strategies Adopted to Integrate Mixed Methods in this Study**

Informed by the discussion in section 3.30 above, the approaches employed to integrate the application of the quantitative and qualitative components of this study were operationalised in three specific areas, namely: during the conceptualisation of the study, the data collection, and the synthesis of the findings. The conceptualisation phase involved the identification of the research problem and the formulation of the main research question, namely, “Why did international students currently studying in Uganda choose Uganda and, more significantly, the institution they are currently attending?” In order to provide a clearer focus the main research question was broken down into the following three sub-questions, namely: *What are the pull factors that motivate international students to choose Uganda and the university they are attending?*, *What push factors make international students leave their countries to study in Uganda and the university they are attending?* and *What are the lived experiences of international students in Ugandan universities?* These questions laid a firm foundation for the integration of qualitative and quantitative methods in the study. The second area of integration applied was the use of a combination of data collection methods and tools in order to answer each research sub-question. The fact that the “what” and “why” components were built into the survey instrument and the semi-structured in-depth interviews reflected the integrated nature of the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the study (Siddiqui & Fitzgerald, 2014; Creswell et al., 2013).

In combining data collection methods by the use of a survey questionnaire and semi-structured interviews (Siddiqui & Fitzgerald, 2014), I aligned myself with Bazeley’s (2012) view that the use of facts and interpretation derived from both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of a study provide a basis for a better conceptualisation of individual, group or societal behaviour than may otherwise have been the case. On this point, Howes (2015) attests that obtaining input from a study population is one valuable strategy designed to achieve the most valid and reliable data. In the case of this study, I held a strong view that only the study population (international students) had the ability to provide relevant answers to the research questions under investigation, given that they had the lived experiences. This explains why the focus and attention of the study were directed at eliciting their opinions. However, Johnson et al. (2007) cited in Siddiqui & Fitzgerald (2014, p. 138), warns that, although the application of mixed methods in a study may bring out findings that are either in agreement or divergent, whatever the case may be, the researcher does achieve high quality answers to the research questions, even when the process may not be obvious. The third

and last area of integration in the study was the synthesis of the quantitative and qualitative findings that enhanced the explanations, insights and discovery pertaining to pertinent issues. This was achieved through an independent analysis of both the responses obtained from the completed survey questionnaire that provided the quantitative data; and from the findings derived from in-depth interviews from which themes emerged and were used to augment the quantitative findings. The findings of this study were arranged according to the results attained from the analysis conducted and informed by both sources of data. This was in line with Bazeley's (2012) argument that such integration that applies different but supportive sources of data yields better outcomes when the research results are structured and derive from both methods used. Throughout the research report reference was made to relevant literature that aligned with the findings. Further integration took the form of quotes from the qualitative data to support related statistical findings from the quantitative analysis of the study.

#### **3.4. Study Area and Justification of Choice**

The study was conducted in Uganda at Makerere University, Kampala (MAK), a public university, and Kampala International University (KIU), a private but chartered university, as the case studies. MAK and KIU were purposively chosen for this study based on a number of considerations. With regard to the purposive sampling of the two universities, I considered Cohen Manion, and Morrison's (2007, p. 113) argument that this method of sampling is appropriate when the focus of study is on a specific category of people (in this case international students) and there is no intention to generalise the findings. Regarding the choice of MAK for the study, NCHE (2011, p. 38) attests that, of the five government-funded public universities in Uganda, MAK had the highest number of 1,899 students enrolled which represented 5.7% of total student enrolment in 2011. In addition, MAK is the largest, most traditional, most highly recognised and oldest public university in Uganda. Established in 1922, it has admitted international students for a long time (Sicherman, 2008). It was ranked third in Africa in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings, 2016/17, the best in Uganda, and in the region (MAK Visitation Committee Report, 2016, p. xv). Likewise, regarding the choice of KIU, with its motto of "Exploring the Heights", NCHE (2011, pp. 38–39) indicated that, of the 25 private universities in Uganda, KIU had 6,715 international students, which represented 56% of the total student enrolment and "*is a top South-South foreign student-enrolling university in East Africa*" (Ssempebwa, Eduan, & Mulumba, 2012, p. 143). In nationwide universities rankings in 2015 KIU emerged as the best private university and, at the

time of the study, it was ranked as the best private university in Uganda. These considerations all combined to influence the choice of KIU as a participating case in this study.

### **3.5. Study Participants and Its Justification**

Cohen et al. (2007) posit that, in any scientific study, it is essential that the data is collected from a distinct study population. Oanda (2009), Othieno and Nampewo (2012) and NCHE (2010, 2011, 2013/14) show that foreign students in Uganda are predominantly from Kenya, Tanzania, Democratic Republic of Congo (the DRC), Burundi, Rwanda, South Sudan, Somalia and Eritrea. In view of the fact that this study was based on an earlier study on academic student mobility conducted in South Africa (Lee & Sehoole, 2015) and the aim of the study was to gain an insight into the international students' experience in Uganda, the appropriate study population was determined as the international students enrolled in Uganda at the time of the study. International students were deemed to be the appropriate study population who would be able to provide the right answers to the research question under investigation. This was based on the belief that they would have accumulated personal experiences through their interaction with the systems and procedures at the universities, with government systems, including immigration and visa processes, and with the communities in Uganda and would be able to share their experiences of such engagements (Schoonenboom, 2015). In addition, personal lived experiences are not held and observable within the public domain, but are contained in the participants' "black box" which is formed through their awareness (Polkinghorne, 2005). Based on personal experiences, international students are able to identify issues that negatively affected their academic and social life.

It is also important to note that a number of organs, namely, the University of Pretoria Ethics Committee, the Ugandan National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST) which is mandated, under Cap. (209) to, among others, oversee and coordinate research and development (R&D) in Uganda, the Gulu University Research Committee and the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Sports (MoESTS), Uganda, all approved the study being conducted in Uganda and the use of international students as the study population. Hoare (2012) provides further justification for the use of international students as a study population in view of the fact that, in Hoare's (2012) view, their voices are rarely heard in their study destination countries. I found this argument applicable to this study and, in fact, during the

interviews sentiments were expressed to this effect, which further validated the choice of this study population. The choice of international students as a unit of analysis was also informed by rationale of the study (see section 1.6).

### **3.6. Sampling Technique and Selection Criteria**

According to Polit and Beck (2017), cited in Moser and Korstjens (2017, p. 2), sampling is a careful and systematic selection of a condition, context and participants with the capacity to generate available rich data on the issue under investigation. Two universities, MAK and KIU, were purposively sampled on the basis of their uniqueness in admitting large numbers of international students (NCHE, 2011; Ssempebwa, Eduan, & Mulumba, 2012). Although purposive sampling is sometimes criticised as not being representative and the findings not being generalisable, *“its purpose is to gain in-depth information from the right participants”* (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 115). In this case, international students were purposively sampled based on the view that they were the right participants who possessed the information required to answer the research question on pull-push factors and lived experiences in Uganda. The study adopted a sequential sampling design, as described by Briggs et al. (2014) and Creswell (2014). In accordance with this study design, respondents from the first phase of the survey formed the basis on which participants for the second phase (in-depth interview) were sampled. Informed by the sample in an earlier study conducted by Schoole and Lee (2015), the sample for this study comprised 100 international students from each institution under study. According to Cohen et al. (2007), a study that involves surveys requires no fewer than 100 respondents in each major category of the study population. In order to find the 100 international students, an online questionnaire was sent to all the email addresses accessed for both MAK and KIU students with the quantitative data provided by the first 100 respondents who filled in and returned a complete questionnaire used in the data analysis. For the qualitative phase of the study, while applying human judgement to determine the sample size (Cohen et al., 2007), 15 respondents for the in-depth interviews were identified as suitable to provide responses that would enhance further the understanding of the research topic. Only those international students who filled in a complete online questionnaire, answered question 41 in the affirmative and indicated their willingness to participate in the interviews were interviewed.



To qualify for participation in the study, inclusion criteria were determined to avoid obtaining data from the wrong respondents. These criteria included the following, namely, the candidate had to be either an undergraduate or postgraduate international student, male or female of sound mind, studying either at MAK or KIU, and able to communicate verbally in English. The reason why I specified the English language as an eligibility criterion was that I did not provide for the use of an interpreter in cases where an international student was not English-language compliant in view of my inability to cope with the cost implications and the mechanism for its application. The exclusion criteria were determined as follows: international students on a three-month exchange programme or a one-semester programme were considered to have insufficient experience to share, those unable to communicate in English, and students from other countries on a visit to their friends. When sorting the data for the quantitative data analysis, I conducted a critical observation of the exclusion criteria in the completed online questionnaire in relation to each individual student's personal information. The purpose of this process was to guard against analysing responses from non-qualifying students, which I believed could slant the results either way (Glick, 2010).

### **3.7. Data Collection Process and Procedures at MAK and KIU**

This section presents the processes I used to conduct the surveys at MAK and KIU. Accordingly, the section discusses how permission to conduct the study was sought, how internal arrangements for the study were structured by university management, and how access to information and email addresses was made possible, to mention but a few. Details of the procedures are presented, first those relating to MAK and then to KIU.

As Seidman (2006, p. 48) advises, I visited MAK to acquaint myself with the environment in which the study was to be conducted. In addition, by visiting the university I found out the key offices which could help me to obtain informed consent. In an effort to obtain permission to conduct the study at MUK, I presented to the Vice Chancellor introduction letters issued to me from the University of Pretoria, the MoESTS and UNCST for ethical clearance and approval as stipulated in (Cap. 209). On receipt of the introduction letters, the Vice Chancellor issued a formal letter of appointment to the head of the International Students Office to coordinate, provide necessary guidance, documents and facilitate entry into any offices which I needed. The above procedures proved useful in the recruitment of international students to participate in the study.

The formal appointment of the head of international students' office was useful during the process of accessing official records and the international students' email addresses from the Academic Registrar's office. I accessed the email addresses of 320 international students to which the online survey questionnaire was then sent. In the case of KIU, permission letters with the same content as those for MAK were submitted to the Vice Chancellor in charge of academics, innovations and research. I held a brief discussion with him to inform him about the study. Based on the documents submitted and verbal discussions permission was granted and the Dean of Students was assigned as the focal person to facilitate the entire process involved in conducting the study. With the help of the Dean of students, I accessed the email addresses of 480 international students. In line with Meho's (2006) recommendation that personal invitations to respondents may illustrate the extent to which they are valued in performance of web-based studies, a personal invitation request to participate in the study, a brief summary of the study and a survey link were sent to all the international students' email addresses during the period from November 2016 to April 2017.

The brief summary introduced me to the study population and included the topic of the study; the study objective; the purpose of the study; the main research question and sub-questions; and the anticipated implications of the study. Based on the nature of the study design and the main research question, three data collection instruments, namely, a survey questionnaire, a semi-structured in-depth interview and document analysis, were used in the study. Quantitative data was collected first using a survey instrument which was emailed to all international students whose email addresses had been accessed. On a weekly basis I sent reminders requesting them to fill in the survey questionnaire. This was followed by the collection of the qualitative data through in-depth interviews and also a documentary review that generated more information which corroborated the findings from the quantitative data (Creswell, 2014). Mohd Noor (2008) argues that when various data collection techniques are combined in a case study, the results are of a high quality while the findings arising from the one approach in the same study may be confirmed by the findings from the other approach. Details of the processes and data collection tools used are discussed in the next subsection, starting with a discussion on the survey questionnaire, then the interview and, finally, the document analysis.

### **3.7.1. Application of Survey Questionnaire as a Data Collection Method in the Study**

While I recognise different survey methods exist, this study adopted the online survey approach to answer the research question. Specific to MAK and KIU, an online survey instrument was sent to the email addresses of 320 and 480 international students as supplied by the Academic Registrar and the Dean of Students respectively. As a strategy to achieve the required sample size of 100 completed questionnaires, I visited the international students' social event at KIU and explained the study. The use of the survey questionnaire was deemed appropriate for the study because of its advantages. For example, according to Sugiura, Wilesm, and Pope (2017), survey questionnaires produce rich quantitative and qualitative data about divergent individual experiences in respect of the issue in question with the data being collected at specific time and period (Cohen et al., 2007) In addition, the lower cost and time efficiency gains are an added advantage while involving large numbers of respondents in diverse locations and receiving the survey on their personal e-mails (Meho, 2006). Behr, Kaczmirek, Bandilla, and Braun (2012) cited other advantages such as allowing for similar probe questions to be administered to each respondent and providing the interviewees with time in which to consider their answers without researcher manipulation.

In an effort to achieve both complementarity and deep understanding, the study used a mixture of closed- and open-ended questions in the online survey questionnaire (Azorín & Gamero, 2014) to solicit the international students' responses. Closed-ended questions with both solicited and unsolicited responses were designed to quantitatively draw out the international students' characteristics, views and way of life. Behr et al. (2012) observes that, although open-ended questions are a common feature of online surveys, they are prone to non-response because it is more demanding to respond to open-ended questions as compared to closed-ended questions .They (Behr et al) caution that, as the investigators advance new probes, respondents tend to be hesitant to offer answers. In view of this caution, when designing the survey instrument, it was deemed necessary to ensure that the minimum the effort would be required to answer the questionnaire but also that the questionnaire would still elicit relevant descriptive answers. Sugiura et al. (2017) highlight the issues that researchers ought to consider when planning online research. Specifically, they cite the challenges related to how to guarantee informed consent, privacy and anonymity in the research process as compared to a non-web-based study. However, the researcher in this study sought to minimise these challenges through careful planning during the proposal development phase while the strategies which were designed to address these challenges were approved by the

Ethics Committee of the University of Pretoria. With regard to informed consent, the study provided for voluntary participation in both the survey and the in-depth interviews. Before the start of the interviews, details of the study, including the need to record the interviews, were explained so as to enhance interviewees' understanding and approval. Specific to concerns about privacy, where, on receipt of the survey instrument, a respondent raised a personal inquiry about the instrument, the response to such inquiry was addressed to the person concerned without copying the conversation to the other international students.

However, this study did not use only the survey instrument in the data collection process owing to its known weaknesses. Cohen et al. (2007) enumerate the challenges associated with survey studies, including, among others, the complexities involved in both planning survey studies and the data collection processes; the researcher tending to remain distant from the process in an effort to attain objectivity; and the extent of reliability of the findings in case the respondents consulted other parties when filling in the survey instrument. The collection of survey data informed the latter process of interviews that were conducted. Thus, in order to mitigate the challenges involved in an online survey and gain to insights into the finer details of students' experiences, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted to elicit information about the participants' individual academic and social life encounters in Uganda. During these interviews concerns about anonymity were taken into account – see next section.

### **3.7.2. Application of the In-depth Interview as a Data Collection Method in the Study**

Through the earlier visits I had made to seek the consent of the management of both MAK and KIU to conduct the study I was able to make contact with key international students, I interacted with them and we agreed on dates to meet the larger groups of students they agreed to mobilise. Thus, I made appointments and informed about the study. The interviews which were conducted for the purposes of this study were carried out in accordance with the approved design of the study, which provided for the collection of quantitative data by means of a survey instrument, followed by the collection of qualitative data through semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured interview guide, as proposed in the study conducted by Lee and Schoole (2015) in South Africa was adopted for the purposes of the study as it was found to suit the Ugandan situation. Only those participants who had answered “yes” to question 41 in the survey instrument, namely, “Are you willing to participate in a confidential interview to further discuss your experiences?” were

interviewed. The agreement to participate in the study was taken to signify that voluntary informed consent had been granted as was planned during the planning phase of the study and, thus, no form was signed to this effect. An interview guide (Annexure F) developed during the proposal stage and approved by the University of Pretoria Ethics Committee was used to guide the interviews and collect data on specific areas of the study from all the respondents. Open-ended questions were used to qualitatively investigate key constructs that related to the international students' pull-push factors and their lived experiences in line with the research question under investigation. In accordance with the ethical requirements of this study, the participants were informed about how they had been chosen and also of their rights and responsibilities, namely, voluntary participation; the right to withdraw from the study at any time and the right to refuse to answer any question if they so wished and given a guarantee that their decision would be respected (Leeson, 2014). Moreover, according to Pelzang and Hutchinson (2018), the potential respondent has the final discretion as to enrol for or decline to participate in a study. In addition to the written consent provided during the completion of the online questionnaire, the respondents; verbal consent to participate in the study was sought. Each interview lasted between 45 and 60 minutes.

In view of the fact that it is not possible to write down all that is said during an interview (Mohd Noor, 2008), the respondents' consent was sought to record the interviews to ensure the accuracy of the interactions. All the interviews conducted were recorded verbatim. Pelzang and Hutchinson (2018) do observe that seeking consent to record data may result in the respondents providing limited information that lacks richness and depth. The interview protocol included questions that focused on each of the study objectives. In broad terms, a set of questions was asked under the following categories, namely, choice of Uganda and university; academic life; social life; personal experiences; and learning outcomes. The questions were the same in the online questionnaire completed earlier. However, the design of the semi-structured interviews catered for questions were asked to achieve deeper insights (Elliot et al., 2015) into each of the international students' experiences. The interviews contained open-ended questions which were designed to motivate the interviewees to provide rich answers (Azorín Gamero, 2014). This view is supported by Chenail (2011), who affirms that open-ended questions give respondents with leeway to provide extensive responses. Based on the interviewee's response and the need to further understand any answer that was not clear, extensive probing was applied to elicit rich information. Mattelmäki (2008) indicates that probing, as an activity, involves talking to other people in order to obtain new insights, reflect

on their life activities and share their own experience. Accordingly, the respondents are given a reasonable time in which to reflect on the probing questions before providing responses to clarify specific experiences. Thus, as a strategy, probing is used to trigger critical thinking and explore unclear issues with the respondent and is aimed at achieving intelligent and relevant responses. Even though Behr et al. (2012) caution on the extent of the use of probing questions in an interview. Interviews were deemed appropriate for the purposes of this study for a number of reasons. They provided an opportunity to learn from the international students' own descriptions of their experiences and their explanations of scenarios instead of the researcher having to imagine; they ensured a deeper discussion based on issues that emerged from the probes; and they made it possible for the researcher to gain an emphatic understanding of the students' lived experiences through the engagement between the researcher and the respondent (Mattelmäki, 2008). In addition to the use of probes, prompts, involving strategies such as eye contact, leaning forward as a sign of interest in the response being given and the general body demeanour, were used to encourage the participants to provide more information than may otherwise have been the case (Moser & Korstjens, 2017). The interaction between survey and interview was necessary because the questions asked in both were interrelated and were aimed at ensuring a deeper analysis of the three research sub-questions. This demonstrates how this study applied the mixed methods approach to answer the research question. According to Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2009), the integration of data collection instruments during the interview phase of a mixed study is not uncommon because the research approach used is dependent on the conceptualisation of the research problem and the research questions to be investigated.

The interviews at MAK were delayed by the spontaneous strikes that took place and that involved the academic staff, non-academic staff and students and resulted in the closure of MAK from November 2016 to February 2017. The interviews at Makerere University were held from the end of February to the end of April 2017 in a quiet office space provided by the International Students Office. Fifteen respondents participated (6 Kenyans, 2 Tanzanians, 2 South Sudanese, 1 Somali, 1 Ethiopian, 1 Rwandese, 1 Cameroonian and 1 Burundian) in these interviews which were conducted in English in face-to-face sessions on the basis of agreed upon appointment(s) between the researcher and each respondent.

Regarding KIU, instead of the 15 planned interviews with respondents who had confirmed their attendance, only 13 interviewees (5 Nigerians, 2 Somalis, 2 Congolese, 1 South Sudanese, 1 Kenyan, 1 Zambian, and 1 Rwandese) presented themselves despite the fact that four reminders had been sent to the other two prospective respondents, who opted out just before the planned interview dates. The interviews were held between November 2016 and March 2017 in the office of the Engineering Students Association. The interviews spanned such a long period because only a few interviews were conducted in November as the students were writing their examinations and immediately afterwards they went on their December holidays. Owing to the busy nature of the students' engagement with university activities in January and February 2017, only a few interviews were conducted during these two months with the last interviews being held in March 2017. The interview sessions were more dialogic in nature rather than question-and-answer monologues (Moser & Korstjens, 2017). In addition to audio-recordings, brief notes were made to augment the recordings and to facilitate the subsequent data transcription. In order to achieve a deeper conceptualisation of the research context, research problem and research questions and to enhance the quality of the investigation, document analysis provided the connection. This is discussed in the next subsection.

### **3.7.3. Application of Document Analysis as a Data Collection Method in the Study**

Written text contained in documents constitutes an important source of information for researchers (Wickens, 2011). Remaining abreast of discoveries and trends in a discipline, although difficult and time-demanding, enhances the quality of research output (Tkaczyk, Szostek, Fedoryszak, Dendek, & Bolikowski, 2015). Documents provide support for or clarify information which has been obtained using other data sources. According to Findley (2010), secondary data collection in research provides a focus to what is known about a research topic and the gaps in the existing literature. Bowen (2009) conceptualises document analysis as a deliberate process in which researchers engage and which involves carefully examining documents to assess and discover clear meanings, achieve deeper insights, achieve orientation in respect of the study context and literature and obtain scientific knowledge based on the research interest.

In view of the fact that I wanted to discover what was both known and unknown about international student mobility and experience in Uganda, the study adopted the use of document analysis as a method of data collection. Document analysis occurred at the same time the questionnaire survey

and interviews were being conducted. This process started as early as 2014 and continued until the research report had been completed. The decision to use this method was informed by the benefits associated with document analysis in any research setting as well as my nine-year career as an educator in an institution of higher learning that depended heavily on records in its daily work. This aligns with the assertion of Wells, MacLeod, and Frank (2012) that documents give meaning to education settings. For example, through the use of document analysis as a data collection method, Salinas and Friedel (2016) provided a country perspective on the complexity, key constraints and available openings to which state systems of community colleges are exposed.

However, Spalding et al. (2010) fault the application of document analysis in a research process based on its limited engagement, or lack thereof, with people as a unit of analysis in the study. The above limitations notwithstanding, for the purposes of this study an analysis of relevant institutional documents such as strategic plans, annual reports, graduation handbooks and university fact books was conducted. In addition, documents of a national nature and character were consulted, for example, ministerial policy statements; the National Development Plan (NDP1) 2010/2011–2014/2015; the National Development Plan (NDP 11) 2015/16 – 2019/20; the National Vision 2040; the Ugandan Citizenship and Immigration Control Act (1999); reports from the Office of the Auditor General (2010) on the Value for Money Audit on Passport Processing by the Passport Control Department in the Ministry of Internal Affairs; and reports by the National Council for Higher Education (an institution that regulates all higher education institutions in the country). Similarly, documents compiled and signed by the East African Community were consulted, specifically the Treaty for the Establishment of the East African Community signed on 30 November 1999 and which came into force on 7 July 2000 (Amended on 14 December 2006 and 20 August 2007); the East African Qualifications Framework for Higher Education (2015); the Inter-University Council for East Africa Act (2009); the report on the East African Common Market Protocol and Free Movement of Labour: Achievements and Challenges of Implementation in Uganda (2012); and a research article on politics in the indigenisation of library and information services and the recommended way forward for East Africa (Magara, 2010).

The document analysis provided clarity on the numbers and trends in international student enrolment; peak and slump years; countries with the highest and lowest enrolment of international students; existing national policies; laws and strategies applied in respect of international students



enrolment; and national and regional commitments and coordination mechanisms on quality of education at the national and in the East African Community member states. The analysis of relevant documents provided further insights into the strategies used by international students within the institutional, Ugandan and regional contexts. At the institutional level of the document analysis, it was established that there is an International Students Office in the organisational structures of management at MAK, which reports directly to the Vice Chancellor. It was also established that the University Strategic Plan 2008/09–2018/19 articulates internationalisation as one of the crosscutting themes of the plan and identifies strategies such as the recruitment of international students and staff; engagement in student exchange programmes; engagement in collaborations and partnerships in research, teaching and publication (MAK Annual Report, 2012, p. 15); joint curriculum development; video conferencing sessions; live webcast presentations of cases for discussion; and capacity-building initiatives for execution (MAK Annual Report, 2013, pp. 18–19). In addition, university support for international students also involves assisting them to obtain a student pass and to find suitable accommodation either on or off campus (MAK Annual Report, 2008).

A further strategy was the adoption of good practice from international collaborations such as conducting PhD defence in public; PhD supervisors not functioning as examiners; and students' publication of their work before graduation (MAK Annual Report, 2008, p. 30). The national documents consulted revealed government plans to increase funding from 0.30% of the GDP to 1% with effect from 1999 to public universities as a strategy to maintain Uganda's competitive edge as a supplier/exporter of education in the region (NDP 1, 2010/11–2014/15); commitment to the provision of a conducive policy environment that attracts student and staff mobility in Uganda; the formulation of an institutional and regulatory framework (NDP 1, 2010/11–2014/15, p. i); the reform of curricula at all levels to ensure the production of skills relevant to the national and international markets; investment in research capacity enhancement and undertaking cutting edge research; and the promotion of strong public private partnerships (PPPs) for sustainable development (NDP II, 2015/16–2019/2020). Similarly, the Uganda National Budget Speech for the financial year 2017/18 (2017/18, p. 24ii) demonstrated a commitment to improving existing learning facilities at tertiary institutions, including the reconstruction of laboratories and workshops; and the adoption of the online e-visa and e-permit systems to assist investors, tourists, students and other travellers.

In addition, online immigration services (e-visa) to reduce the lead time of doing business were commissioned (Ministry of Internal Affairs Policy Statement, financial year 2017/2018, p. xv). Furthermore, the document analysis revealed that Uganda is party to several regional and international engagements aimed at enhancing Uganda's relationship with its neighbours and other countries outside of the region. In 2010/11, more than 400 resolutions and agreements were initiated, negotiated and concluded between Uganda and other countries. For example, Uganda ratified the East African Common Market Protocol (CMP), which facilitates the free movement of capital, labour, services and goods (NDPII, 2015/16–2019/2020, p. 45). Similarly, the literature consulted indicated that, under the auspices of the EAC, the East African Qualification Framework for Higher Education (EAQFHE) was developed as a tool for the harmonisation of education and training systems and the qualifications attained. In addition, the analysis of the documents referred to above contained both specific and broad information that illuminated interventions, plans, strategies and policies the implementation of which affected, in some way, the academic and social well-being of international students in Uganda at the time of this study. The knowledge gained from the document analysis provided broad perspectives and guidance while the in-depth interviews were being conducted, the data analysis was being conducted and the findings were being written up.

### **3.8. Personal Experience during Data Collection Process**

The data collection in both universities was not as easy as had been anticipated when the design of the study was planned and approved. The entire data collection process, which involved both a survey questionnaire and in-depth interviews, lasted for about six months, from November 2016 to April 2017 for both universities. However, the document analysis continued until the final research report had been completed. Armed with all the introduction letters from the University of Pretoria, the Ugandan Permanent Secretary MoESTS, and UNCST, it had been my expectation that the preliminary data collection process would start immediately on approval from the management of both universities. However, this was not the case at either university because access to the records for the document analysis and international students' email addresses was problematic.

In the case of MAK, as a result of the inadequate records of the international students' email addresses, with the support of the International Students Office, I visited the College of Agriculture

and Environment Studies (CAES) and the Makerere University Agricultural Research Institute, Kabanyoro (MUARIK), which had relatively large numbers of international students. It is worth mentioning that Cohen et al. (2007) highlight permission to conduct research and to interact with the study population should not only be granted but that it should also be possible for the researcher to implement this. Earlier on, before I had embarked on the fieldwork, I had imagined that, as universities are managed by highly trained managers who have a clear understanding of the access requirements in a research undertaking, I would face few difficulties. However, the reality was quite different. On several occasions, university staff members with access to the required documents were either not in their offices or absent for a few days attending to official work or to social challenges in their lives. Similarly, the international students with whom appointments were made and who had agreed to the venue and time to meet did not honour their commitment, thus causing me immense frustration. Interviews were twice interrupted unexpectedly by the student campaigns to be elected to the students' guild office despite the cool and quiet nature of the interview room. Similarly, two mini-strikes by students against the tuition fees policy at the MAK University prompted police intervention with tear gas to prevent the destruction of property and this also interfered with the interview process. These experiences taught me that, however tightly a study is designed, external factors beyond the researcher's control may impact negatively on both the researcher and the respondents during the research process.

Without the presence of a formal contact person in the International Students Office, it would have been very difficult for me to conduct the study within the time constraints due to the four month closure of the MAK. This reality led me to make a critical judgement on the importance of the researcher's interpersonal skills (McAreevey & Das, 2013) during interactions with and the management of institutional gatekeepers to gain access to records, help in the recruitment of respondents, save time and resources and achieve the research objective. I recognised that the power of persuasion, courtesy and respect is greater than that of any formal authority a researcher may have to influence a number of factors on a study site. In this case, my experience with the gatekeeper at MAK was mainly positive although I am aware that such experiences may be negative, depending on the gatekeepers' constructed reality, motivation and power base. In line with the advice of Cohen et al. (2007) on how to meet the target group, at some point I gained access to international students informally through their colleagues who had completed the survey questionnaire and had been interviewed. The informal contacts I cultivated were requested to

persuade their friends to fill in the same questionnaire. This approach helped me to increase the number of survey respondents to 100, as had earlier been planned and approved by the University of Pretoria Ethics Committee.

With regard to KIU, it was a challenge to access official records because of the sensitivity attached to international students' data which is considered as a key source of revenue for the university. There was a fear that the release of such information would compromise KIU's competitive edge in the international student context. In respect of the recruitment of student, I developed informal contacts with the leaders of the international students' country associations who mobilised their colleagues to fill the online questionnaire. This approach worked and facilitated the process of filling in the online questionnaire. During the data collection exercise I learnt that the worst time in which to conduct academic research in institutions of learning is from November through the peak holiday from mid-December to mid-January (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014, p. 208). I lost valuable time to a combination of events during this period, namely, students' preparation for the end of semester examinations, the long December holiday and, in the case of MAK, repeated strikes and the eventual closure of the University for Four months. I also realised that the best time to meet students in an academic research undertaking was in the evening after they had attended their own lectures. Some respondents also had some financial expectations and made outright demands for financial recompense while others would tactfully indicate such expectations.

### **3.9. Data Analysis**

According to Abdul-Khalid (2009), data analysis is an activity in which the researcher creates actual meaning from the data collected within a predetermined theoretical base and methodology and within a given context. Bazeley (2012) considers that the data analysis in mixed methods studies is predominantly confusing, still under a trial process, requiring the use of what works best for researchers, and demanding openness, flexibility and creativity.

#### **3.9.1. Quantitative Data Analysis**

The data required in this study was collected from two independent, primary sources, namely, MAK (107 international student respondents and KIU (121 international student respondents). A pretested questionnaire was used to collect the primary information. The primary information was then coded and analysed using SPSS statistical software (Azorín & Gamero, 2014). A quantitative analysis using SPSS statistical software with a focus on descriptive statistics and the comparison

of the mean and standard deviation was conducted while inferential statistics focused on correlation techniques during the data analysis. The correlation technique was used to compare relationships and patterns in the factors findings as per the survey questionnaire responses from the MAK and KIU international students. The determined correlation coefficient established the magnitude and direction of the relationship between the constructs and other variables of interest in the field responses of the MAK and KIU respondents. Although regression and factor analysis are important in the analysis of relationships and the exploration of patterns, and ANOVA and independent T-test are useful in testing the significance of the mean difference in respect of the variables of key interest; in this study, ANOVA and T-test analysis was deemed not to be necessary because there was no hypothesis to be tested nor was there any need to make a prediction about the future trends in international student mobility in Uganda. With the survey being descriptive in nature, the focus was on the collection of data on the variables of interest, such as attitude, preferences, beliefs and behaviours based on past and present international students' academic and social life encounters.

### **3.9.2. Qualitative Data Analysis**

In order to derive meaning from the field data, the study employed a thematic analysis approach. According to Bricki and Green (2002), thematic analysis involves a process of critically searching through all the data to pick out commonly occurring issues and later identify the main theme that links all the sub-themes identified. After the data collection had been completed, the process of thematic analysis began with my immersing myself in the data to gain a broad view of the issues emerging from the data. I listened to the audio-recording of the in-depths interviews several times; read the transcribed interview data line by line a number of times and grouped similar ideas together; read the field notes; and recollected the individual experiences which had been shared during interview. In this process, I made comments reflecting my initial observations, thoughts and feelings about the data in the margins of each data set/transcript read. After these initial stages of familiarising myself with the data, I commenced a process that involved a critical examination of the data to identify the initial themes, which provided a summary of what had been stated in the data. This process that led to the identification of themes was preceded by coding. According to Basit (2003), coding is a critical process during data analysis which is aimed at structuring and deriving sense from the textual data in any study with a qualitative design. Maree (2014) points out that coding refers to the process of carefully reading through the transcribed data line by line,

and then isolating the data into meaningful units of analysis. In line with the definitions proposed by Basit (2003) and Leedy and Ormrod (2014) that coding involves allocating tags or labels to give meaning to the textual data collected, codes were developed by reading through the transcribed data, line by line, and grouping the data into different units, marking categories of data, and using descriptive words, unique identifying names, phrases, sentences and paragraphs. In order to derive meaning from the individual data sets, I used the cut-and-paste function in MS Word to extract data from the original interview script for easy identification. The extracted data was put together with other, similar data on the same topic to develop a common pattern across the data sets. However, upon deeper interaction with the data sets, the initial coding scheme was amended to fit the nature of the data provided by the various respondents. This was in line agreement with Strauss and Corbin's (1990) assertion that codes used in analysis may emerge from the words and phrases used by the interviewees in their responses. Codes which shared similarities or common patterns within the data sets were instinctively and logically categorised to fit together into conceptual categories.

During the analysis the emphasis was on information that was mentioned repeatedly by most of the respondents as opposed to unique information given by particular interviewees that provided deeper meaning to their context but that was limited in interpretation in relation to the views of the majority (Ayres, Kavanaugh, & Knafl, 2003). Themes were developed on the basis of repeated information given by different respondents during the interviews. As themes began to emerge, I engaged in a constant comparison process (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) to determine whether to link, reject or leave the themes as they were. This was in agreement with the assertion of Spalding et al. (2010) that patterns and themes must emerge from the analysed field data. The patterns that were identified informed the themes that provided the basis for the narrative of this thesis report. This tied in well with Creswell's (2009) assertion that themes are comprehensive pieces of information composed of many codes summed together to describe a frequently discussed phenomenon, while Mouton (2006) advises that it is important to link findings to a relevant theory to validate them. In line with Mouton's (2006) advice, the push-and-pull theory was applied as a theoretical lens through which to conceptualise and link the findings (see discussions in the next Chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7). The theory was not used to make any predictions (Abdul-Khalid, 2009) but, instead, to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of student mobility in Uganda. In the earlier part

of the study, the same pull-push theory was applied in the conceptualisation of the study while it also gave focus to the literature review in Chapter two.

### **3.10. Quality Measures for this Mixed Methods Study**

The quality of the output of a research study is a function of the way in which the ethical and clinical activities are conducted in the research process. Shaw and Satalkar (2018) maintain that integrity in research implies sincerity, impartiality and focusing on the research questions as the data is collected as well as during the analysis and interpretation of the findings. In essence, the research process, output and conclusions should manifest the truth without any falsification by the researcher (Vink, 2014). While the literature contains rich information on the quality of research outputs with respect to validity, reliability and rigour in purely quantitative studies, and credibility, transferability, dependability and generalizability in qualitative studies, this has, nevertheless, not been adequately examined for mixed methods studies (Ihantola & Kihn, 2011; Long, 2017). Similarly, Hashemi and Babaii (2013) indicate that a number of scholars apply quantitative and qualitative approaches in their studies but that a few of their research processes and outputs only meet the expected level of integration. Nevertheless, despite what the literature cites, validity and reliability were used to ensure quality results for the quantitative component of the study; while trustworthiness and credibility indicators formed the litmus test for the qualitative findings. This is discussed in the next subsection.

#### **3.10.1. Approaches Adopted to Ensure Validity of the Quantitative Findings**

Validity relates to the extent to which the research findings demonstrates the actual results the study intended to achieve (Drost, 2011). One approach which was used to ensure the validity of the results was the triangulation of the data collection methods in terms of which the requisite data was collected by an online questionnaire in the first phase of the study and, in the second phase, semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted. The questions posed in these interviews were based on the questions that had been asked in the survey. The purpose of integrating the data collection methods was to identify commonalities and differences in the data sets. This is in line with the aim of expanding the knowledge derived from the different data collection methods applied and to confirm the findings from the previous phase. In accordance with Azorin and Gamero's (2014) view that mixed methods enhances the understanding of the research phenomenon, validity was achieved through a process of integration of the data analysis

approaches, from which quality inferences were made. During this process, the temptations of researcher bias (Ongwuegbuzie, 2005) inherent in favouring one technique of analysis were avoided by ensuring the analysis was based on the approved study design. In addition, the choice of international students as the most appropriate respondents to answer the research question ensured that the inclusion and exclusion criteria (see section 3.6. on sampling technique and selection criteria) used for the respondents were made clear in the introductory statement to the online survey, the instructions were explicit and not vague, the terms and questions adhered to the research protocol as approved by the University of Pretoria Ethics Committee and UNCST approvals, and that appropriate samples, which were neither too small nor too large were used. Similarly, a balanced view of the quantitative findings was presented without any intended bias or omission. In order to overcome the challenge of insufficient knowledge that would affect the validity of any study (Ihantola & Kihn 2011) and to lay the groundwork for enhancing the quality of the findings, I engaged in the extensive reading and analysis of relevant documents and articles to ensure I had a sound grounding in the subject under inquiry. In an integrated process, the dimensions discussed above facilitated the objective extraction and recording of individual experiences from the right respondents, ethically engaging in the data analysis, and presenting the exact findings and limitations that emerged from the study. These considerations formed the basis upon which the claims of the validity of this study are made.

### **3.10.2. Approaches Adopted to Ensure Reliability of the Quantitative Findings**

In relation to reliability, Cohen et al. (2007) describe the output of a research study as reliable when researchers apply the same instruments of data collection to the same respondent under similar conditions and the results are similar to the results of the previous study. In principle, the reliability of research output implies dependability, consistency in the results and the replication of a study providing precise and accurate results (Leppink & Pérez-Fuster, 2017). Despite the fact that this study was not a replication research study, the approaches adopted to ensure the credibility and reliability of the findings involved deliberate action in terms of which the students were pre-informed about a forthcoming international students' survey through notices which were placed on all the notice boards at campus; the provision of a covering letter as an attachment to all the emails sent about the research that explained in explicit terms the study and introduced the researcher to the international students; and a clear explanation on how to get to the online survey link to access the survey questionnaire. In addition, polite, follow-up, email reminders were sent



and telephone calls made to the respondents I had met with on the campuses and who had promised to fill in the online questionnaire. Fink and Kosecoff (1985, p. 50, cited in Ihantola & Kihn, 2011) advise that, in designing survey instruments, question flow should be well mapped. In line with this advice, the questions contained in the questionnaire were in a logical order with no typographical errors, and they were simple to read, understand and interpret. Similarly, clear instructions were issued on where and how to submit the completed questionnaires. The students were also advised that, after filling in the online questionnaire, clicking the submit button would complete the entire process of filling the questionnaire. In addition, I also ensured immediate responses to individual queries about the study and my physical presence at the universities provided confidence that the survey questionnaire they were asked to fill was for a real study and not just filling it for its sake.

### **3.10.3. Quality Measures in the Qualitative Component of the Study**

The quality of the research output in a quantitative study depends on the study's rigour and validity and, in a qualitative study, on its credibility and trustworthiness (Cope, 2014). To claim quality research output in a qualitative study implies adherence to the principle of trustworthiness throughout the entire research process. Maree (2014) and Lincoln and Guba (1985) claim that trustworthiness in a scientific investigation relates to the transferability (applicability), dependability (consistency), credibility and confirmability of the findings which reflect rigour in the entire research process. In their view, if the claim of rigour in the process, must be based on the following, namely, that specific strategies were deployed, for example, peer debriefing, prolonged engagement, focus on negative cases, persistent observation, audit trails and member checking. In this study the strategies adopted to enhance the quality of the findings were specific to trustworthiness and credibility considerations, as discussed in the next sections.

#### **3.10.3.1. Strategies Adopted to Achieve the Trustworthiness of the Findings**

Informed by the relevant literature (Cope, 2014; Maree, 2014; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and aware of the importance of producing quality results from the research processes, specific interventions were implemented, on which the truthfulness of this study is based. In particular, the researcher adhered to the earlier approved study design and research questions (Lillis, 2006, p. 467), as suggested in Ihantola and Kihn (2011), and all research protocols. The researcher also kept a record of all the decisions made during the study. This was in line with Morrow's (2005, p. 257) emphasis

on “the importance of an audit trail in the research process”. In addition, the researcher ensured both confidentiality and anonymity throughout the data collection process, and objectively captured the experiences of the respondents as they had been expressed. During the data transcription every word was captured and written in its raw form. Codes were used in the data analysis, the patterns and themes that emerged were derived from the raw data, and a thick description of the study setting was provided. In writing the report, quotes that illustrated deep, clear and relevant meaning were used, while every effort was made not to make generalisations and draw conclusions based on only a few incidents from the data set.

### **3.10.3.2. Strategies Adopted to Achieve the Credibility of the Findings**

The concept of credibility in qualitative investigations is akin to internal validity in quantitative studies; transferability to external validity or generalisability; dependability/consistency to reliability, and confirmability to objectivity (Morrow, 2005). Credibility refers to the possibility of another researcher going through the same documented research process and producing similar findings (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008) which raises concerns about trustworthiness in the entire research process. In order to ensure credible results, the following strategies were deployed throughout the entire research process: I documented the data collection, data analysis and data interpretation and reported the processes involved. In specific terms, the data was collected over period of four months at each of the study sites in line with the concept of a reasonably lengthy interaction with the research population (Morrow, 2005, p. 252), the interview questions were logical, in line with the research agenda, all the interviews were audio-recorded verbatim (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013) after obtaining the respondents’ consent to do so before the interviews commenced on site. As a back-up (Mero-Jaffe, 2011), field notes were made during and immediately after the meetings with the respondents, the activities contained in the detailed research plan which had been developed earlier were fully implemented, although not exactly as per the earlier dates anticipated, the cordial relations that developed between the researcher and the respondents were managed by the researcher remaining ethical and focused on the study and with a clear delineation of the engagement as purely academic (Lillis, 2006). It is important to note that the data collection, analysis, interpretation and presentation focused on the actual rather than on abstract or imagined responses (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013).

In addition, I engaged in the triangulation of data collection methods and the results were corroborated by the use of a survey questionnaire and semi-structured, open-ended questions during the in-depth interviews. This instilled confidence in the findings and the conclusions drawn. Furthermore, I engaged in debriefing with peer researchers and my colleagues at work who are also undertaking their PhD studies at the University of Pretoria. Whereas it was originally intended that the transcribed data from the recorded interviews would be given to the international students to validate its authenticity (Mero-Jaffe, 2011), this did not happen. In the case of KIU, it was the result of the respondents' participation in the preparation for the international students' cultural gala, and the start of end of semester examinations while, for MAK, this was due to the tight programme which was aimed at catching with the lectures which had been as a result of the series of strikes. Thus, at both MAK and KIU it was not possible for the international students to read through the transcribed interview scripts.

Despite the time constraint, I endeavoured to conduct the research ethically and rigorously as designed earlier. On this point, Abdul-Khalid (2009) cautions researchers to be aware of the way in which their inherent biases, subjective nature, values and assumptions may inadvertently affect the credibility of the research output. In the light of this caution and on the basis of the many perturbing experiences as an international student, I struggled to keep my reactions to myself so as not to cause the respondents to break down and disrupt the interviews although I empathised with them during the interviews. Furthermore, the credibility of the study was enhanced through the presentation of detailed and rich descriptions of individual lived experiences and the contexts within which the respondents encountered life (Marrow, 2005). In this case, the following contexts were cited, namely, during application for admission; access to travel documents and student visas/permits; classroom and internship engagements; relationships among and between the academic and non-academic staff; life within and outside of the university; and social life in general. Moreover, the credibility of this study was enhanced through the attainment of data saturation by using a sample of 100 international students to participate in the online survey, as was the case in Lee and Schoole's South African study on academic mobility (Lee & Schoole, 2015). Similar data saturation was achieved during the semi-structured, in-depth interviews which were conducted with 15 and 13 international student respondents at MAK and KIU respectively. Creswell (2014) and Briggs et al. (2015) describe data saturation as the point in the data collection at which additional respondents do not offer any new insights into the research question.

### **3.10.3.3. Mixed Methods Validation Process**

For the purposes of this study validity was assumed to imply that, from the application of both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis processes, it was possible to make objective and positive claims that the overall findings and conclusions derived were of a high quality. Teddlie and Tashakkori (2003, 2009) term this inference quality. The strategies adopted in this study to ensure high quality inference included, among others, applying the sequential mixed methods study design, first collecting the survey data during the first phase of the study, analysing the data on the basis of the findings from the survey and considering concepts that required further explanation for qualitative follow-up during the in-depth interviews which were conducted during the second phase of the study. The respondents who took part in the follow-up interviews comprised a sub-sample of the respondents who had filled in the survey questionnaire in the first phase and who had indicated an interest in being interviewed. This choice of the sample was made in line with Creswell and Plano Clark's (2007) caution that, to ensure quality inferences and less complications in a sequential study, the sample for the follow-up phase should be drawn from the sample used in the first phase.

### **3.11. Ethical Strategies Adopted in the Study**

The ethical strategies applied to this study aligned with Meltzoff's (2005, p. 311) assertion that ethical concerns play a role throughout the research process. Accordingly, specific strategies were applied before the start of fieldwork, during the data collection and data analysis and in reporting the findings. Regarding the strategies adopted before the start of the study, I applied and obtained ethical approval dated 8 March 2016 from the Ethics Committee of the University of Pretoria; and I also attained clearance dated 6 May 2016 from the Gulu University Research Ethics Committee. This approval and clearance were secured because I had satisfied the documentation requirements and provided assurances of confidentiality and privacy strategies which were reviewed by the committees. The approval and clearance from the two ethics committees were in line with the Helsinki Declaration (1964) that demands that investigators submit detailed research proposals to an independent committee for review (Meltzoff, 2005). In accordance with this, Maree (2014, p. 44) advises that researchers must acquaint themselves with the research policy of legitimate institutions that oversee the research activities in which they engage. In addition to the approval and clearance referred to above, permission to conduct the study was sought from the MoESTS, UNCST, MAK and KIU. These requests for permission were accompanied by an approved

research proposal, protocol and ethical approval by the University of Pretoria Ethics Committee, an introduction letter from the then Head of Department, School of Education, Management and Policy Studies and a verbal explanation of the study when submitting the documents. On the basis of the documents submitted and the verbal explanation provided, the following permission was granted: from MAK, the permission was dated 18 April 2016; from the Permanent Secretary, MoESTS, it was dated 26 April 2016; from KIU, it was dated 28 April 2016 and, from Uganda's UNCST, it was dated 21 June 2016.

With regard to the participants in the quantitative part of the study, their informed consent was sought when the mails and attachments in respect of the survey explanatory note were sent to the email addresses of the international students. The fact that the explanatory note was clear in that it indicated the voluntary nature of participation and, thereafter, 107 and 121 respondents from MAK and KIU, respectively, responded by filling in the online questionnaire was taken to indicate voluntary consent on their part. Similarly, for those who filled in the online survey and indicated their willingness to participate in the in-depth interviews, their submission was deemed to indicate voluntary consent to participate. In addition, the respondents were informed that their participation in the interviews was voluntary and that, if at any point during the interviews, they wished to stop, this would be accepted and that would not disadvantage them in any way. Each participant in the research study was assured of respect. Furthermore, each participant was assigned a pseudonymous identity code during the data collection, the data analysis and in the final research report to ensure the confidentiality, anonymity and safety of the respondents (Briggs et al. 2014, Creswell et al. 2016; Leedy & Ormrod, 2014). The respondents were also informed that the information they would provide would be used purely for academic purposes and it would help the researcher to fulfil the requirements for the awarding of a Doctor of Philosophy but also that the applicability of the recommendation in the findings lay with the universities, the ministry and the government, something which was beyond the researcher's mandate. In addition, the participants' consent to record the interviews verbatim for the purposes of further analysis was sought and obtained.

### **3.12. Summary of Chapter**

This chapter discussed with the methodological approaches used in the study. It also detailed the philosophical grounding of the study and the study design, and justified the choice of study design.

In addition, the chapter described how the mixed methods approach had been integrated into the investigation process, the sampling approaches employed and the data collection process and procedures. The chapter also presented a detailed account of the researcher's fieldwork experience as well the data analysis process. Finally, the chapter discussed quality concerns and the ethical strategies employed in the study. The next chapter focuses on the data presentation as well as a discussion, analysis and interpretation of the findings on academic experiences.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Pull and Push Factors in Uganda**

#### **4.1. Introduction**

This chapter presents the findings from the responses from both the survey questionnaire that was administered and the in-depth interviews that were conducted with MAK and KIU international students. The aim of the investigation was answer to the research question "What are the pull and push factors that motivate international students to choose Uganda and the university they are attending? The quantitative findings focused on the descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) for the pull and push factors to determine the importance of each. The analysis of these findings illuminated the key pull factors in respect of for international students' choice of Uganda.

A correlation analysis was also conducted to compare the attitudes (positive or negative) of the international students at MAK and KIU in respect of each theme that had emerged but without making prediction about the future of international student mobility in Uganda. A regression analysis was not conducted because the study was not designed to statically test any hypothesis (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014) and neither were the t-test, ANOVA and *p*-value calculated to determine the differences between MAK and KIU international students in respect of perception, region, academic and social experience, benefits of studying at the two institutions and future plans. The analysis of the qualitative data from the MAK and KIU interviews provided evidence of five pull factor themes which were similar in respect of both, namely, political and geographical considerations, sSocio-cultural factors, family and parental influence, economic considerations, specifically, tuition and the cost of living and hospitable environment while one pull factor theme which emerged, namely, flexible university admission processes, was specific to KIU. In linking the qualitative to the quantitative findings, verbatim quotes are provided with minimal corrections made to the grammar in the language usage, words and sentences in order to enhance the understanding of the message without changing the meaning projected by the participant in question. In presenting and discussing the findings, the pull factors are considered first and, thereafter, the push factors.

## **4.2. Survey Analysis and Results**

In order to gain a deeper understanding of the findings, this section presents the characteristics of the respondents on which the study narrative was based. Statistics on the respondents' age were obtained as the focus was on gender, language in use, continent of origin, source of funding, major being studied, degree programme enrolled for and refugee status.

### **4.2.1. Makerere University Respondents' Characteristics**

Of the 106 respondents who indicated their gender, 80 (75%) were male and 26 (25%) were female. In respect of the most commonly used language, of the 104 respondents who answered this question, 50 (49%) indicated English and 54 (51%) indicated others languages, thus providing evidence of the diverse nature of the international students at MAK. Regarding continent of origin,

of the 105 respondents who indicated their origin, 101 (96%) were from Africa, two (2%) from Asia and one (1%) from Europe with one (1%) categorised as other. The responses in respect of their chosen majors are presented in the figure below:

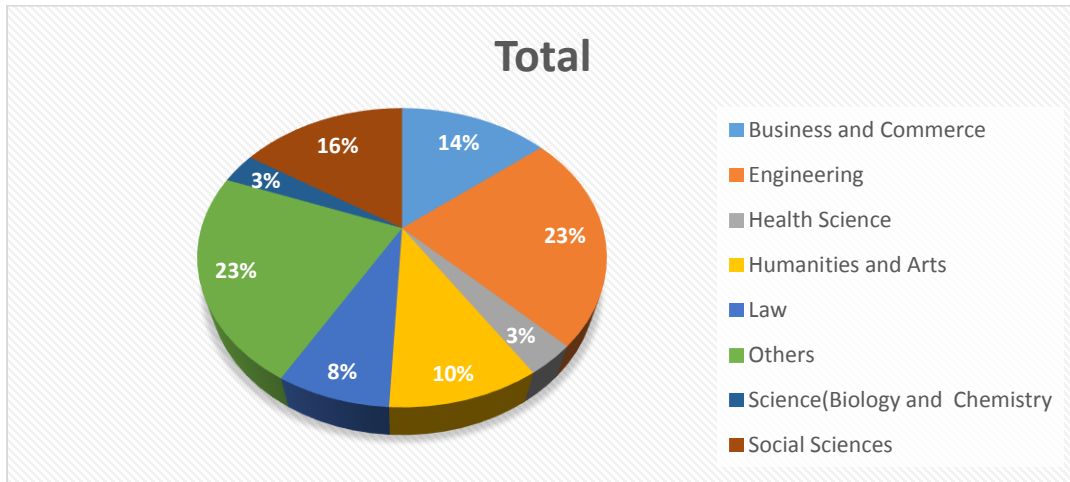


Figure 4. 1 :Respondents and their chosen majors

Of the 106 respondents who indicated their major source of funding, 67 (63%) cited family/friends, 10 (9%) home country government, two (2%) Makerere University, 27 (25%) other sources of funding while not one indicated the government of Uganda. In relation to their nationality, 96 (90%) indicated that they were not refugees while 11 (10%) indicated that they were refugees/asylum seekers. In terms of the degree programme for which the respondents were enrolled, the findings are presented in figure below:

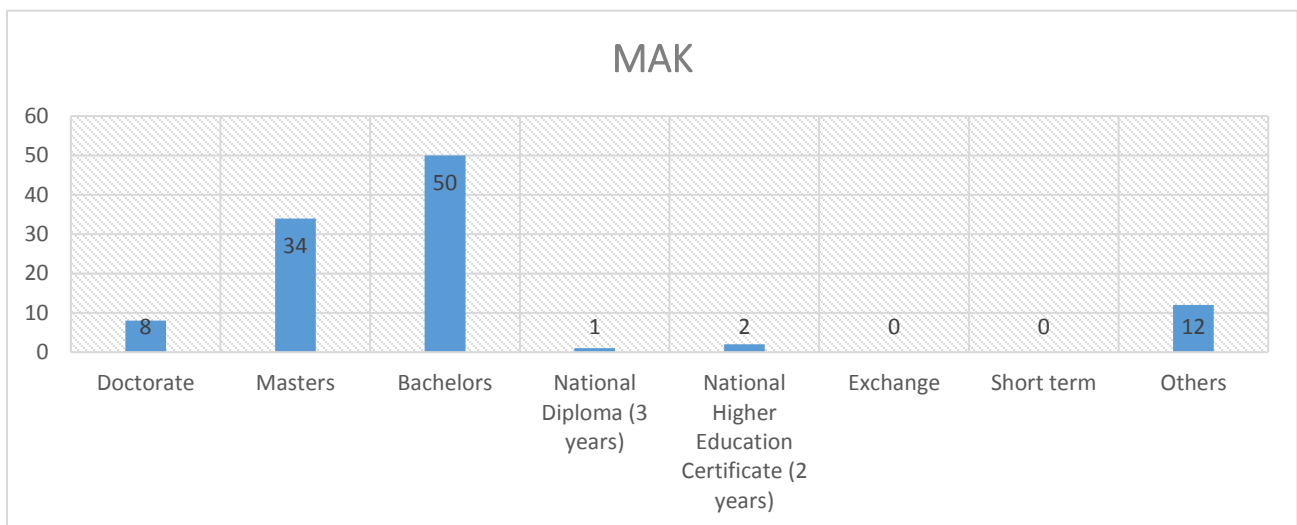


Figure 4. 2: Degree programme international students enrolled in at MAK



It was found that majority of the respondents 50 (47%) were enrolled for a bachelor’s degree, 34 (32%) for a masters or professional degree (MTech, MA, MSc, MBA, MPhil, etc.), 8 (7%) for a doctorate (DTech, PhD), while 12 (11%) categorised their degree programme as others. It was assumed that the responses attained were of high quality given the high level of intellectual capacity of the respondents.

#### 4.2.2. Kampala International University Respondents’ Characteristics

Of the 121 responses from the international students from KIU who participated in the study, 97 (81%) were male and 24(19%) were female. In respect of the main language spoken, 71(59) indicated English while 49(41%) indicated other languages, thus confirming the diverse nature of the international student body at KIU. In regard to continent of origin, of the 121 responses, 118 (97%) indicated Africa, two (2%) Asia and one (1%) Europe. In respect of the source of funding of the 122 responses registered, 107 (88%) indicated personal/family, one (1%) the Ugandan Government, seven (6%) their home country government, two (1%) KIU, while five (4%) cited others. Regarding the majors chosen the 120 responses were registered and categorised as follows: seventeen (14%) Business and Commerce, twenty eight (23%) Engineering, four (3%) Health Science, twelve (10%) Humanities and Art (English, African Studies), nine (8%) Law, four (3%) Science (Biology, Chemistry), 19 (15%) Social Science (Psychology, Sociology), with thirty three (27%) being categorised as others as detailed in the figure below

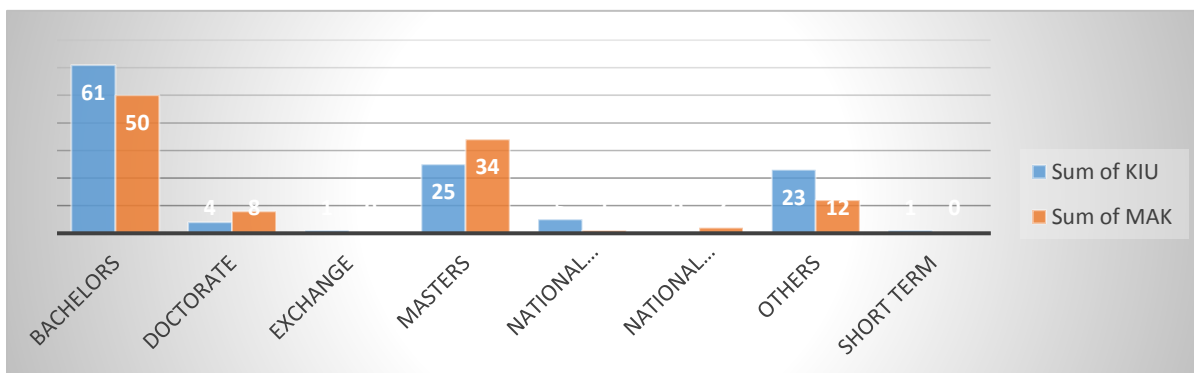


Figure 4. 3: A comparative analysis of the degree programmes for which the international students were enrolled at MAK and KIU

In this analysis, N=227 respondents. It was observed that the majority of the respondents 50 (47%) from MAK who participated in the study were enrolled for a bachelor’s degree, 34 (32%) for a masters or professional degree, eight (7%) for a doctorate (DTech, PhD) while twelve (11%) were

categorised as others. A similar observation in relation to the participants from KIU revealed that 61 (51%) were enrolled for a bachelor’s degree, 25 (21%) for a masters or a professional degree; four (3%) for a doctorate while twenty three (19%) were categorised as others. In both the institutions, while the numbers or percentages differed, the category and nature of admission reflected the prevailing trends in the international students’ enrolment for a bachelor’s degree. In respect of nationality, 114 (94%) indicated that they were not refugees while seven (7%) identified themselves as refugees/asylum seekers.

#### **4.3. Pull factors for Choice of Uganda by International Students**

This study used Mazzarol and Soutar’s (2002) conceptualisation of pull factors; directional factors (Park, 2009) and/or magnet of opportunities (Schoole, 2011) as those features that result in international students choosing a specific country or institution in which to study. In order to attain a clear understanding of the reasons for or the degree of importance which the international students assigned to their choice of Uganda, descriptive and inferential statistics were used for each of the sub-theme that informed the basis of this thesis. The mean and standard deviation were used to identify critical pull factors for both institutions – see Tables 4.2 and 4.3 below.

**Table 4. 2: MAK descriptive statistics of pull factors in the choice of Uganda**

Factor	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Uganda is located close to my home country	1	4	2.33	1.05
Uganda has an easier visa process	1	4	2.00	0.97
I expect better future jobs with a Ugandan education	1	4	2.65	1.08
To experience Ugandan culture	1	4	1.92	0.85
To improve my English language ability	1	4	2.42	1.19
To get away from my home	1	4	1.47	0.81
Opportunity for academic research in Uganda	1	4	2.66	1.09
My professor/teacher/counsellor advised me to study in Uganda	1	4	1.78	0.99
I have family or friends in Uganda	1	4	1.85	1.0
Political stability and safety compared to home country	1	4	1.98	1.15
Lower cost of living in Uganda	1	4	2.11	0.97
I received government funds to study in Uganda	1	4	1.41	0.85

Others	1	4	2.52	1.25
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Source: MAK Primary Data 2017; Likert scale: Not Important /True (1), Somewhat Important (2) Very Important (3) and Most Important (4)

**Table 4. 3: KIU descriptive statistics of the pull factors in the choice of Uganda**

Factor	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Uganda is located close to my home country	1	4	2.11	1.08
Uganda has an easier visa process	1	4	2.69	1.02
I expect better future jobs with a Ugandan education	1	4	2.56	0.99
To experience Ugandan culture	1	4	2.16	0.98
To improve my English language ability	1	4	2.61	1.12
To get away from my home	1	4	1.72	0.98
Opportunity for academic research in Uganda	1	4	2.54	1.00
My professor/teacher/counsellor advised me to study in Uganda	1	4	1.80	0.95
I have family or friends in Uganda	1	4	2.20	1.19
Political stability and safety compared to home country	1	4	2.40	1.17
Lower cost of living in Uganda	1	4	2.21	1.07
I received government funds to study in Uganda	1	4	1.15	0.58
Others	1	4	2.19	1.33

Source: KIU Primary Data 2017; Likert scale: Not Important /True (1), Somewhat Important (2) Very Important (3) and Most Important (4)

The average scores for MAK and KIU were determined as 2.08 and 2.18 respectively with both reflected somewhat important and weak factors on the Likert scale. However, in respect of the respondents at the two universities, there was a 4.8% difference in favour of KIU, thus indicating that the responses obtained from the survey instrument favoured KIU as compared to MAK. The comparative standard deviation for MAK and KIU was 0.14 and 0.43 respectively, thus implying a small difference exists between the MAK and KIU international students' choice of Uganda as their destination country. According to Briggs et al. (2014), correlation analysis helps researchers to uncover associations that exist between two or more of the variable and context under study. In this case, there was a correlation of 0.75 between the MAK and KIU international students' choice of Uganda as a destination country, thus indicating a similarity in thought processes of the international students at the two institutions. The findings were arrived at by application of the 80:20% rule to the categories in the choice of Uganda during the data analysis for both MAK and KIU – see Table 4.5 below.

**Table 4. 4: Categorisation of the level of importance of the pull factors in the choice of Uganda**

MAK

Field	Mean	% mean	Cum. % mean
Q.1.7	2.66	0.098	10
Q.1.3	2.65	0.098	20
Q.1.13	2.52	0.093	29
Q.1.5	2.42	0.089	38
Q.1.1	2.33	0.086	46
Q.1.11	2.11	0.078	54
Q.1.2	2	0.074	62
Q.1.10	1.98	0.073	69
Q.1.4	1.92	0.071	76
Q.1.9	1.85	0.068	83
Q.1.8	1.78	0.066	89
Q.1.6	1.47	0.054	95
Q.1.12	1.41	0.052	100

*Source: Analysed survey data 2017.*

KIU

Field	Mean	%mean	Cum. % mean
Q.1.2	2.69	0.095	9
Q.1.5	2.61	0.092	19
Q.1.3	2.56	0.090	28
Q.1.7	2.54	0.090	37
Q.1.10	2.40	0.085	45
Q.1.11	2.21	0.078	53
Q.1.9	2.20	0.078	61
Q.1.13	2.19	0.077	68
Q.1.4	2.16	0.076	76
Q.1.1	2.11	0.074	84
Q.1.8	1.80	0.064	90
Q.1.6	1.72	0.061	96
Q.1.12	1.15	0.041	100

*Source: Analysed survey data 2017.*

In terms of the reasons for the choice of Uganda (Table 4.5), the study revealed the top pull factors that contributed to the 76% preference for Uganda. The factors as considered in the sequence of importance that the international students had considered in their choice of Uganda included opportunity for academic research in Uganda (M = 2.66, SD = 1.09); the expectation of a better future job with a Ugandan education (M = 2.65, SD = 1.08), other factors (M = 2.52, SD = 1.25), desire to improve English language ability (M = 2.42, SD = 1.19), location of Uganda close to home country (M = 2.33, SD = 1.05), lower cost of living in Uganda (M = 2.11, SD = 0.97), easy visa process in Uganda (M = 2.00, SD = 0.97), political stability and safety compared to home country (M = 1.98, SD = 1.15) and desire to experience Ugandan culture (M = 1.92, SD = 0.85). The finding “others” was qualified to include the following factors: duration of the course, opportunity to buy and send commodities home to boost home business, love for Uganda, praise received about the education in Uganda, particularly at the Makerere university, hospitality and good people in Uganda, no segregation in Uganda based on any factors, home country at war, and interest in the A-level curriculum which was non-existent in the home country, among others. However, the study also established factors that contributed less than the other factors to pull international students to Uganda, namely, having family and friends in Uganda (M = 1.85, SD =

1.00), advice from professor/teacher/counsellor to study in Uganda (M = 1.78, SD = 0.99), getting away from home (M = 1.47, SD = 0.81) and receipt of government funds to study in Uganda (M = 1.41, SD = 0.85)

Specific to the KIU categories that contributed to the 76% preference for Uganda, the study established, in their order of importance, factors that the international students had considered in their choice of Uganda as easier visa processing (M = 2.69, SD = 1.02), desire to improve English language ability (M = 2.61, SD = 1.12), expectation of a better future job with Ugandan education (M = 2.56, SD = 0.99), opportunity for academic research in Uganda (M = 2.54, SD = 1.00), political stability and safety compared to home country (M = 2.40, SD = 1.17), lower cost of living in Uganda (M = 2.21, SD = 1.07), having family and friends (M = 2.20, SD = 1.19) and to experience Ugandan culture (M = 2.16, SD = 0.98). The finding “others” was qualified to include reasons such as convenience of studying in Uganda, easier admission process from home country, parental influence, Ugandan hospitality, and sponsorship conditionality to study abroad. In addition, and in a sequential order, the study established factors that contributed less than the other factors to pull international students to Uganda, namely, proximity to home country (M = 2.11, SD = 1.08), advice from professors/lecturers/counsellor (M = 1.80, SD = 0.95), getting away from home (M = 1.72, SD = 0.98) and receipt of a government scholarship (M = 1.15, SD = 0.58). In order to obtain a clear understanding of international choices from the list of factors presented in table 4 above, it was logical to list the most important factors that had made a significant contribution to the choice of destination country. However, the sieving of the most important factors did not discount the contribution of the other factors listed in their order of importance. The four most important factors that emerged from the quantitative findings in order of priority that the international students at MAK and KIU had considered in their choice of Uganda and based on the percentage mean are presented in Table 4.6 below. In developing Table 4.6, the notion of triangulation protocol was applied, as discussed by O’Cathain, Murphy and Nicholl (2010). Triangulation protocol involves listing the findings from different methods on the same page and then looking for findings that speak to each other (converge), findings that provide supportive information on the same theme (complement) or findings that provide evidence of differences in the findings (discrepancy).

**Table 4. 5: A triangulation protocol of key pull factors in the choice of Uganda by the international students at MAK and KIU based on the 80:20% rule**

Makerere University 38% contribution			Kampala International University 37% contribution		
Factor	M	SD	Factor	M	SD
Opportunity for academic research	2.66	1.09	Ugandan has an easier visa application process.	2.69	1.02
The expectation of better future jobs with a Ugandan education	2.65	1.08	Improve English language ability	2.61	1.12
Others	2.52	1.25	Expectation of better future jobs with a Ugandan education	2.56	0.99
Desire to improve English language ability	2.42	1.19	Opportunity for academic research	2.54	1.00

*Source: Analysed survey data 2017.*

As shown above, while there were similarities in some factors (convergence) in both institutions, namely: opportunity for research, expectation of a better job with a Ugandan education and desire to improve English language ability; the relative weights in importance as considered by the international students varied, thus eliciting a different interpretation given that reality is both subjective and socially constructed. A difference in some factors (discrepancy), namely, “others” for MAK and easier visa application process for KIU were as evident and applicable in a different context. Based on the findings, it was argued that international students at MAK considered opportunity for academic research as more important in their choice of Uganda as a study country as compared to their counterparts at KIU who cited the easier visa allocation process in Uganda as the most important reason for their choice of Uganda. This may be said to indicate that the international students at MAK were more concerned about achieving their academic goals, while their KIU counterpart appeared to be more concerned about the visa processing for the ease of travel – a non-academic variable which may have indicated the desire to for leisure and tourist intentions rather than academic goals.

In respect of the four least important pull factors in the choice of Uganda as the destination country, there was a 75% similarity in the factors and their order of ranking at both institutions. In respect to MAK, the least important pull factors included having family and friends in Uganda (M = 1.85, SD = 1.00), advice from professor/teacher/councillor to study in Uganda (M = 1.78, SD = 0.99), getting away from home (M = 1.47, SD = 0.81) and the receipt of government funds to study in Uganda (M = 1.41, SD = 0.85) while in respect to KIU, the least important pull factors were that

Uganda is located close to the home country ( $M = 2.11$ ,  $SD = 1.08$ ), advice from professors/lecturers/counselor ( $M = 1.80$ ,  $SD = 0.95$ ), getting away from home ( $M = 1.72$ ,  $SD = 0.98$ ) and the receipt of a government scholarship ( $M = 1.15$ ,  $SD = 0.58$ ). These findings provided evidence of an alignment in the thoughts and conceptualisation of pull factors (3 out of 4 of the less important pull factors) among the international students in the two institutions in respect of the order of importance in the list of factors while, in the top ranking pull factors for the two institutions, there was no agreement but, instead, similar pull factors on the list of factors in a different order although ranked differently.

In line with the triangulation function used in mixed method studies (Creswell, 2014), of the 12 factors listed in table 4.3, and table 4.4, four of the most important and influential factors listed were identified through the application of the 80:20% rule as playing a critical role in the choice of Uganda as destination country by the international students from both institutions. It is important to note that quotations from the interviews and used in this thesis were illustrative in nature and represented examples of the ideas which were frequently expressed in the data sets from MAK and KIU. The use of direct quotes gave a voice to the respondents while providing support for the findings (Creswell, 2003; Krueger & Casey, 2014). Using Tables: 4.3 & 4.4 as a point of reference, the qualitative findings validated the quantitative findings in respect of the opportunity for research which was captured under the theme of quality of education at an affordable cost in the qualitative findings. Likewise the quantitative finding in respect of to improve English language ability was validated by the desire to learn or improve English in the qualitative findings. The next subsection presents details for both of these validated findings starting with the quality of education at an affordable cost and followed by the desire to learn or improve English language ability.

#### **4.3.1. Quality of Education**

In the quantitative findings for MAK (Table 5), opportunity for research in Uganda emerged the top pull factor ( $M = 2.66$ ,  $SD = 1.09$ ) and at KIU, it emerged as the four most important pull factor ( $M = 2.54$ ,  $SD = 1.00$ ). In view of the fact that research output plays a significant role in the ranking and reputation of a university (MAK Visitation Report, 2016, p. 158), it (research output) was interpreted to illustrate one of the key variables of quality of education (Van Ginkel & Dias, 2007). On the basis of the interpretation, research output was validated in the interview findings as quality of education at affordable cost. While there is unanimity that it is imperative that the quality of

higher education be preserved (Altbach, Reisberg & Rumbley, 2010), Ali et al. (2016) warn that, given the multiplicity of stakeholders in higher education institution, it is no easy task either to define or agree on what constitutes quality higher education. Van Ginkle and Dias (2007) describe quality in higher education as a multi-faced concept that ought to include all operations namely, teaching and learning schedules, research and scholarship, academic and non-academic staff, student affairs, physical infrastructure, community engagement, and academic environment. This study established that the international students of MAK and KIU had chosen Ugandan based on their perception of the high quality of education service offered at these two universities. The following quotations from the interview validate this finding, namely, “*education in Uganda is far better than that of South Sudan ... for the case of another country, say, like Kenya it’s more expensive than Uganda in terms of education*” [KIU6 – South Sudanese] and “*education is much better than it is in Ethiopia so I made a decision to come to Uganda*” (MAK11 – Ethiopian). Another participant added:

*...Back in Nigeria, there are cross cutting courses, for example, Biology, Physics, and Chemistry, while you are studying computer science but, in Uganda, here you specialise in what you are going to do...so, from this aspect, I really enjoy studying in Uganda better than my country...[KIU3 – Nigerian].*

*...Uganda has an upper hand in good quality education so it created a desire in me to have pride having studied in an environment with a better standard of education [MAK4 – Kenyan].*

Implied in the statements above is the fact that the inferior education in the international students’ home countries had impelled them to seek better quality education in Uganda. In addition, it appeared that they were of the opinion that Uganda’s education system would be able to enhance their competence, give them an international perspective and ignite their potential for social transformation in their own societies beyond the university campus, scholarly presentations and policy discussions (Arvanitakis, 2014). This line of argument is in line with Meštrović’s (2017) findings that high education service standards serve to attract students and are a fundamental asset to be nurtured in the effective marketing of HEIs (Dado, Petrovičova, Riznić, & Rajić, 2011) given that it plays an important role in the choice of country and institution at which to study. In the main international students undertake a subjective evaluation of the education systems of different countries in anticipation of attaining both academic and non- academic satisfaction. Students’



perceptions of the quality of education tends to be derived from their engagement in a pre-enrolment information search through word of mouth referrals and marketing information (Narayan, Rao, & Saunders, 2011, p. 368).

It is argued that, based on the information accessed, international students compare this information with their academic expectation and then make interpretations which underpin their choice of a destination country and/or academic institution at which to study. This assertion is in line with the concept of perceived value which refers to an evaluation made by a customer of the degree of utility to be derived from a service or product in terms of satisfying his/her needs and wants grounded on his/her opinion of the service offered and received (Nicklen et al., 2016). In line with this statement Murphy (2007) stressed that international students consider a nationally designed curriculum that appeals to their learning needs as valuable in terms of their career development, knowledge transfer and ability to engage in scientific innovations. It appeared that the international students' choice of Uganda as a study destination had taken into account the fact that the tuition fees and other related costs of living expenses were affordable and the curriculum, teaching and learning activities would help them achieve their desired academic and professional goals. It is argued that, while the choice of destination country is based on the positive image resulting from the various means adopted and attitudes developed by the international students, the student's inherent interest in the country in question influences the amount of energy, time and resources that the student will deploy to the search for information that provides support for the choice of that country.

#### **4.3.2. Desire to Learn or Improve English**

Linked to the system of education of a country is the language of instruction used in the institutions of learning. The study established that international students from nonEnglish speaking countries made a calculated choice of the destination country they believed would help them to learn or improve their English proficiency. In the quantitative findings (Table 4.3) pertaining to MAK, desire to improve English language ability ( $M = 2.42$ ,  $SD = 1.19$ ) emerged as the fourth most important pull factor while, in KIU, desire to improve English language ability ( $M = 2.61$ ,  $SD = 1.12$ ) was the second most important pull factor that had influenced the choice of Uganda as the destination country. It was, thus, observed that the international students at KIU expressed a greater desire to learn English and a greater interest in the English language when making their choice as

compared to their counterparts at MAK. This may be explained by the fact that KIU enrolls more international students who come from non-English speaking countries (NCHE, 2013/2014) as compared to MAK. During the interviews, respondents from both the institutions declared:

*...I chose Uganda because I was from a French education system where everything was in French, the first semester was hard for me because I had to adapt to English. With time I made friends...and even this English, I learnt it from them. I don't see it as a challenge anymore [MAK3 – Burundian].*

*My reason to come to Uganda was, first of all, English ... where I come from people are not that fluent in English and our country has started a strategy to shift from French to English, so I wanted to improve my English and become fluent in it, to use it easily in work and social life [KIU9 – Rwandese].*

The quotations above indicate the desire and willingness to learn and benefit from the application of English in teaching and research (Altbach & Knight, 2007). In addition, they also confirm the need to improve their English language proficiency among the international students enrolled at KIU and who participated in the study. This aligns with the findings of Sawir et al. (2012, p. 10) that international students in Australia experienced challenges with academic writing and oral presentations skills in the academic processes and connected well with other people in cross border engagements. The desire to improve English proficiency as a pull factor into Uganda speaks to and confirms that English remains the main international academic language with national education systems adopting English as a medium of instruction (Altbach, 2007; 2013). Brumfit (2004) observes that the prominence of the English language in national education systems is particularly noticeable in three areas, namely, as the medium of teaching and learning, used in achieving academic and non –academic records and as a subject of learning.

Using English, students learn how to read, write, summarise, argue in class and engage in academic writing that meets international standards. As a subject of learning and the second most widely studied language globally (Altbach, 2013), English has superseded the use of domestic languages in higher education to the extent that national governments have adopted policies to change the medium of instruction in order to meet the current globalisation and internationalisation challenges. Brumfit (2004) posits that the English language has become a “default setting” in terms of its use by the elite anywhere in the world, thus creating the need to adopt multi-linguicism in international business. It is this desire to acquire critical skills in the English language, namely, listening, speaking, writing and reading, that had motivated the KIU international students’ choice

of Uganda in their desire to be relevant in the global market. As Altbach (2013) states, a worldwide intellectual community requires a unifying system of connecting with one another and it is through English language that this is made possible – a phenomenon expected to remain for some time to come. English language dominance is expected to last long because of its wide application in “ business, trading, education, communication, science and technology, media, computer, publication, internet, and so on. So, it is said that survival is impossible unless there is English language with each of us (Bohara, 2018.96)

Boundless as the English language may be, applying the post –colonial theory to this study to audit the intention for its introduction, and considering that Uganda was colonized by the British, it clearly emerges that the adoption of its useage as a language of instruction was a long designed scheme to popularise it in all its colonies, but undermine the application of the local language in the education system. While learning to speak and apply English presents many opportunities, the challenge associated with it is that it has gradually made the social and cultural values fizzle out and suppressed the development of local and other foreign languages in the education system (Bohara, 2018). Given its supremacy one scholar stated: “*The dominance of English is like a snowball, too big to prevent*” (Xue and Zuo, 2013, p.2262) demand deeper audit of its future consequences. Considering that language is a channel through which national culture is nurtured, the application continued application of English as a language of instruction in institutions of learning continues to compromise the foundation of its ownnational culture (Xue and Zuo, 2013). It is argued that as long as the national culture is weakened by the influence of powerful English culture, even the miniature cultures being nurtured will be completely absorbed. Therefore as international stdents attend their courses in English, their home country language and national cultural development is compromised as they promote the English language hegemony.

#### **4.3.3. Ease in Visa Processing**

Lee, Paulidor, and Mpaga (2017) highlight that admission to study at a foreign university does not imply an automatic right of entry to that destination country. As independent organisations universities operate their systems in the expectation that the existing immigration laws, policies and systems will grant international students visas and permits for the duration of their study. Immigration policies and security concerns are key considerations which governments take into account when allowing individuals into a country. Although visa processing is, in the main, a

cumbersome and exhaustive process it is one that international students must go through to attain a university education at a foreign university. One finding of this study indicated that KIU international students considered the visa processing to be easier in Uganda as compared to elsewhere and it emerged as the most important pull factor ( $M = 2.69$ ,  $SD = 1.02$ ) in respect of the choice of Uganda (Table.4.4). The interview data validated this finding as it appeared that the students had found it surprisingly easy to obtain a visa. This corresponds with the findings of Khan, Hagopian and Johnson (2010) that found that the to meet its domestic demand for physicians United States of America relaxed its visa requirements for international students, a strategy that create a positive image of itself. The quotation below illustrate the easy visa processes in Uganda:

*...In November 2012, Uganda did not have an embassy in Somalia. Whenever we come to Uganda, at Entebbe airport, they would ask you to explain why you were coming to Uganda. You would explain that you have come for studies and they would give you the visa at the airport. However, the situation has changed and visas are now issued in Mogadishu at the airport. Even when visas were being issued in Uganda at Entebbe airport, i was never disturbed [KIU10 – Somali].*

Although the international students from KIU stressed ease of the visa processing this emerged as the seventh most important pull factor (Mean = 2, SD = 0.074) for MAK according to international students who participated in the interviews with one of them stating:

*... it starts with going to the Senate Building, the Dean's office to get an introduction letter to confirm that you are a student, the next day you pick up your letter, you take it to the Department of Immigration and after two to 3 days you go back pick it but, my last time, after going to the department, they gave it to me there and then [MAK1 – Kenyan].*

The statements quoted above indicate that the international students at both MAK and KIU clearly possessed a sound understanding of the visa application requirements and the processes involved. However, although the quotations above supported the quantitative finding and the literature, dissenting views based on their personal experience were also expressed by some of the students:

*... actually, I had some challenges. When I moved to the headquarters in Abuja to process my visas and papers, while I expected the process to last for one week, it took two (2) weeks ... because, when I went to the embassy, I had left some of the requirements they wanted at home and so I had to go back ... and pick them up. I went to the embassy and I applied but*

*they needed my papers to be authenticated, I went back to the foreign affairs and the queue and everything was so bad but I was able to do it [KIU13 – Nigerian].*

This quotation illustrates the challenges international students may face as a result of careless immigration officers or the cumbersome demands imposed by the immigration laws. Lee et al. (2017, p. 12) highlight how South African foreign embassies cite the need for SAQA certification as part of the visa application even when university admission as proof is not detailed as a requirement for a visa application. The extract above pointed to a visa application process that is rigid and slow but meeting a huge demand and requiring additional documentation for prove one's identity. Similarly, it also indicated the laxity of the immigration office in respect to limited attention given to checking through all the documents upon submission by the applicant to ascertain that the requirements have been met and then demanding that more documents need to be submitted despite the financial and time implications of this, thus breeding anxiety and stress. In line with the above findings, Douglas, Lubed, and Kruger (2012, p. 493) opine that African states sometimes operate more than one visa policy with some applying a limited entry policy which discourages travellers from visiting these countries. Although not explicitly stated in the laws and policy documents; the actions, words spoken, facial expression, and application of their discretion by the front line officers at the immigration points sometimes create the impression that travellers are not welcome. The findings of Lee et al.'s (2017) study of the visa experiences of international students to South Africa and the concept of strategic ambiguity appear to speak to a restrictive immigration policy as enforced through the Immigration Act, 2002 (Act No 13 of 2002).

While there was congruence in respect of the quantitative and qualitative finding in respect of the quality of education and desire to improve their English language capacity of the international students at the two institutions; and, in terms of KIU congruency in the quantitative and qualitative finding in respect of the ease of visa processing, there was, nevertheless, an apparent difference in respect of the themes that emerged from the qualitative data from both institutions. The themes that had emerged from the qualitative analysis as important in relation to the choice of Uganda by MAK international students included political and geographical considerations, socio-cultural factors, family and parental influence and economic conditions, specifically affordable tuition and cost of living, and hospitable environment. One theme, namely, flexible university admission, emerged from the KIU qualitative data in addition to the themes from MAK. In view of the fact that the purpose of adopting a mixed method design for this study was to expand on the exciting

knowledge through an enriched and elaborate understanding of international student mobility within the Ugandan context, I am of the opinion that the difference in the findings provides an opportunity to gain a deeper insight into the answers provided to the research question. However, “ *variances in the data findings from different methods does not indicate any problem with the study*(O’Cathain *et al.* ,2010, pp. 1147–1148). Similarly, the use of triangulation protocol facilitates the discovery of findings that agree, partly speak to each other, are silence or are dissonant. In their view, silence occurs when the evidence which emerges from a distinct data set [in this case the MAK and KIU data sets] is the result of the advantages of the methods applied to investigate the issue. In respect to quantitative findings, there was an unexpected silence although the qualitative data resolved the silence by complementing the quantitative findings with rich descriptions achieved from the interviews. The qualitative findings that emerged in respect to the international students’ pull factors in their choice of Uganda and common to both institutions were political and geographical considerations, socio-cultural factors, family and parental influence, economic factors, specifically affordable tuition fees and cost of living and hospitable environment. One theme that emerged that was specific to KIU was the flexible process of the university admission.

#### **4.4. International Students’ Pull Factors into Uganda Derived from the Qualitative Interviews**

An analysis of the in-depth interviews conducted with the MUK and KIU international students produced five key themes as findings that had not emerged from the survey findings, namely, political and geographical considerations, socio-cultural factors, family and parental influence, economic conditions, specifically affordable tuition and cost of living, and hospitable environment. Details of each are discussed in the next subsections.

##### **4.4.1. Political and Geographical Consideration**

In the quantitative findings (Table.3) political stability, as a pull factor, featured as the eighth most important pull factor based on the mean ( $M = 1.98$ ), thus signifying relatively less prominence at MAK, while at KIU it was ranked as the fifth pull factor based on the mean ( $M = 2.40$ ), thus signifying the importance which international students ascribed to this factor when they made their choice of Uganda. Political stability was repeatedly mentioned in the qualitative interviews as the gate through which all international study processes have to pass, especially in matters to do with immigration policies and internal and external security. International students have long sought

higher education studies in highly developed countries which, in most cases, are quite far from their home countries. However, a new trend has emerged where the selected destination for study abroad is influenced by the proximity of the destination country to the home country. Knight and Morshidi (2011) attest that the growth of regional education hubs is a recent phenomenon in international higher education scene and is informed by deliberate national and institutional efforts to make such regional hubs attractive in terms of meet the educational needs of international students. Lee (2010) investigated the Chinese student's choice of study abroad and established that, among other factors, it was the internal Chinese political dynamics that influenced their choice of higher education study in neighbouring Korea. Moreover, Wagner and Westaby (2009) stress the importance of the international student's safety in the destination country. It has been observed that the feeling of safety and being out of danger greatly influence the attitudes of the students in their choice of destination country. In this respect, a respondent stated: *I choose to come and study in Uganda because of its security and then there is no segregation based on nationality [MAK9 -Tanzanian]*. It is argued that international students are more inclined to choose destination countries considered to be safe as opposed to those they believe to be unsafe in respect to lives and property. An earlier finding by Perkins and Neumayer (2013) that destinations which offered greater civil and political freedom attracted more international students highlighted the centrality of politics in international student dynamics. As seen in the quotations below a stable and predictable political environment is a yardstick for a decision to study in a country:

*... politically the country is stable ... [MAK14 – Cameroonian]. In line with literature, citations that support the findings are exemplified as “... for us, in East African, the integration bit of it has made it easy for us to enter because now I don't need a visa only my passport. I reach the border, they stamp it like a visa for staying and that serves but I don't have to process visa every year” [MAK3 – Burundian]. A similar view was that*

*... you can easily get an interim visa [MAK15 – Somali].*

*...from my home country, Uganda is a bit closer [MAK10 – South Sudan; MAK12 – Rwandese];*

*... there are less restrictions on the borders unlike in Kenya [MAK13 -South Sudanese].*

The statements above provide support for the political and geographical pull factor. Conversely Tabor, Milfont and Ward (2015) established that the perception of limited safety, crime and violence is a delimiting factor in respect of the choice of some countries. However, despite the

ongoing concerns about safety, crimes, violence and terrorism, Lee (2017) contends that international students circulate within regions and neighbouring countries in search of quality education. According to sources such as Woldegiorgis and Doevenspeck (2015), Wilkins and Huisman (2011) and UNESCO (2009) this occurs as it is affordable and manageable as the findings in section 4.4.4 (economic pull factors) indicated. The findings on socio cultural pull factors are presented in the next section.

#### **4.4.2. Socio-cultural Factors**

The social context in which individual lives and their contacts in another country are strong pull factors that international students take into account in their choice of a study destination. Tabor et al. (2015) contend that the decision to migrate to and study in another country is influenced by the individual student's character and ambition but is taken within the social environment of the family. The decision is reached through consensus involving the parents although the wider family members and friends also participate and influence the choices made (Adam, 2004). Moreover, the willingness to migrate to another country for study purposes is dependent on the country's perceived feature although the social support and relative cultural similarity also play a critical role in the choice of destination (Wagner & Westaby, 2009). The following quotation provided support to literature: *... and the other thing is, I have some family and friends closer to the society here in Uganda ...* [MAK12 – Rwandese]. It is argued that a destination country which is culturally similar to the home country offers more pull factors that include the ability to assimilate and integrate easily, seek and obtain financial and instrumental support and feel at home as compared to another country which is culturally dissimilar and, thus, would probably offer little support. Clearly, therefore, the choice of a destination country is made based on a consideration of the existing social fabric as a support mechanism which includes relatives and friends (Tabor et al., 2015, p. 28) who will ease the students' integration process. In support of the preceding view from the literature another student stated that: *"It is easier to interact with Ugandans, the way they live is not too different from my people in Rwanda"* [KIU7-Rwandese]. Similar extracts that support the study findings on socio-cultural factors as a pull factor include the following:

*...I like the place....What I liked most was the atmosphere, then I really wanted to know more about the culture, be away from the family and see how I can grow on my own* [MAK5 – Kenyan].



*... it was my parents who knew about KIU through a colleague of his whose children are at school here in Uganda... and that's how he told me to apply [KIU4 – Nigerian].*

*...South Sudanese are the ones who brought me to Uganda, showed me places and helped me [MAK10 – South Sudanese].*

In validation of the quotations and the finding, “*a strong socio-cultural cohesion is a necessary condition if international students are to fit into their new environment*” (Van Riemsdijk, Basford, and Burnham, 2016, p. 20). It is argued that, while the socio-cultural factors contributed to the pull of international students into Uganda, as the finding demonstrate, the individual students must, nevertheless, apply emotional intelligence and take responsibility for their actions, adopt effective self-management approaches and abide by national laws, procedures and processes established by the host country. Equally important is the need to build strategic personal relationships with key personalities in their immediate neighbourhoods where they could seek support in order to help them to survive and integrate well into society as a whole. Scholars have identified the socio-cultural adjustment challenges that international students face as including loneliness, and unease fitting into the culture of the community (Cheung, 2013). These findings from the literature demonstrate that the social cultural pull factor in this study does not necessarily imply a smooth integration into the host country but, instead, calls for the application of appropriate personal adaptation strategies.

#### **4.4.3. Family and Parental Influence**

Ma (2009) cites the role of parental influence in providing financial support, time for counselling and guidance and in terms of parents with professional training providing specific advice to their children about the course to study. Family influence and expectations in respect of their children is seen as stronger at the higher levels of education, specifically in obtaining study opportunities abroad (Pimpa, 2005). It is argued that, with expertise in a specific field and regular discussions with their children, over time parents are able to instil some professional preferences by defining what is appropriate and achievable for their children. The following quotation highlights appropriate influence by the parents as follows: “*I chose to come to Uganda because my parents and brother studied in Uganda and ... that's the reason why I chose to come and study in Uganda*” [MAK13 – South Sudanese].

Taylor, Clayton, and Rowley (2004) discussed the parental role in the academic socialisation of their children as a combination of parental beliefs and behaviours that channel the children's way

of thinking towards studies and academic performance. Accordingly, in making the choice of a study country, the focus is on the student's course preferences as moulded over time at home and in college and based on his/her known academic ability. Nevertheless, throughout this decision process the family must take into account its financial ability to pay for tuition and the cost of living when choosing a destination country (Cheung 2013). The role of parental influence in the choice of a study destination is reflected in the following quote:

*...I had a pass in English language in my O level exams so I went for a private exam, passed and was admitted to Kanu State University of Science and Technology. I went to register and they demanded the certificate ... by that time the private exams results were not yet out and I was not allowed to register ... I had nothing to do. My dad came back home with a brochure of KIU that I should come here to study so that is how it happened [KIU2 – Nigerian].*

Imbedded in the quotation above is the desire on the part of parents to provide support to their children to access and obtain a quality university education and a better life within their financial means. Li (2001) illustrates how Chinese immigrant parents in Canada, informed by their beliefs, expectations and lived experiences, influenced their children through the advice they gave them to study science related courses rather than studying humanities courses. As evidence of strong parental influence, the following statement was made: "My directives play an important role in my son's academic success" (Li, 2001). I would argue, however, that the level of influence and expectations that parents nurture for their children on their academic journey is conditioned by the parents' beliefs and lived academic experiences as conditioned during their formative years. Taylor et al. (2004) contends that a strong hand in parenting and peer support significantly influenced academic achievement among European-Americans as compared to the Asian/African-American students. It is argued that a student's academic outcome is a product of an interplay of what parents do, their opinions, feelings, beliefs and conceptualisation of academic achievement and its expected impact on the broader family. In making decision to study abroad personal interest, family and social considerations are all critical and it is through consensus that a destination country is chosen (Cairns & Smyth, 2011). Nevertheless, "*in Ireland strong family influence and social ties resulted in fewer international students choosing to study abroad*" (Cairns, 2014). In short, it may be observed from the literature and the quotations that parents, family dynamics, peer and social relations do influence the intentions and actual decisions to study abroad. In fact, it may be argued that there is a higher possibility of sending children to study abroad when families have

friendly networks outside of the country, a positive family migration record and an intention to migrate in the interests of higher education studies while the reverse also holds true.

#### **4.4.4. Economic Reasons – Affordable Tuition and Cost of Living**

Given the increasing demands in higher education, the majority of national governments are experiencing challenges in funding the sector fully and are transferring the burden of the funding needs to families who are able to afford high tuition fees. This financial requirement for higher education studies has a bearing on the ability of students to gain admission to HEIs. The cost of living (Wanga & Ho, 2014) and tuition fees that constitute the larger proportion of the costs higher education studies substantially affect a student's opportunity to enrol for higher education studies (Hubner, 2012). Similarly, the study conducted by Ivy (2008) in South Africa on "A new higher education marketing mix: the 7Ps for MBA marketing" found out that tuition fees impacted on student desire to enrol for MBA studies. This may be linked to the view that students from families from low socioeconomic background experience challenges meeting the costs of their university education as compared to those from financially stable families.

Flacher and Kermadec (2013) suggest that students from poor backgrounds are fearful to acquire loans/debts to finance their education as compared to students from well off families whose financial needs are catered for and who, therefore, need not access credit. It appears logical to state that high university tuition fees constitute an impediment to intelligent but financially incapacitated students enrolling for higher education and that this calls for affirmative action on the part of government in the form of offering scholarship as an access route to higher education. However, Haddad and Demsky (1995) contend that a country's level of economic development determines its taxation regimes and the extent of the financial allocation made available to the education system. Similarly, due to a slowdown in the national economy, as a strategy to cope with the resulting pressure, "the Canadian government made adjustment to its immigration policy to attract and recruit more overseas learners" (Zheng, 2010, p. 225). A participant in this study expressed his views concerning the cost of study in determining the choice of country in which to study as follows: "for the case of another country, say, like Kenya, it's more expensive than Uganda in terms of education [KIU6 – South Sudanese]. Another participant opined that:

*... my father saw that advert and he looked at the prices and everything. We compared to Zambia but things in Uganda were okay: the cost of living, accommodation and everything.*

*When we took that into consideration we discovered it was quite cheaper to come here. Actually, that was the main reason why I came to Uganda [KIU13 – Zambian].*

As observed in the quotations about, considerations about affordability in terms of living expenses often guided the international students' choice of Uganda as a destination country. This finding is in agreement the results of the study which Wilkins and Huisman (2011) conducted in the UK and that that found that a wide spectrum of international students found tuition fees and the cost of living to be affordable while studying near to their home country. Similarly, UNESCO (2009) and Woldegiorgis and Doevenspeck (2015) concluded that many students who are not able to afford to study abroad in countries such as the USA or in Europe due to the high tuition fees and cost of living decide to study in neighbouring countries. Moreover, Padlee, Kamaruddin, and Baharun (2010) reported that international students considered tuition fees, cost of living, and commodity pricing in their choice of Malaysia as a study destination. In addition, their study found that, as tuition fees increased, enrolment at universities declined. Naidoo (2007) also observed that, when tuition fees are increased in the destination country, fewer international students enrol at the universities and vice versa. Similarly when the exchange rate goes up in the destination country there is a decrease in the enrolment of international students and vice versa. It is argued that several factors, for example, exchange rate fluctuations, unilateral decisions to increase the cost of education, international and local business environment and changes in the family income, may have a bearing on international students' choice of a destination country, university to enrol, capacity to pay tuition and cost of living. The quotation below highlights the effect of a sound economic environment as follows:

*...the country's economic environment is good. You can easily access dollars, the currency is a bit strong, and you can get a good house for accommodation at an affordable cost and can save money for some other future use [MAK14 – Cameroonian]*

In light of the citation, it is observed when the economy is doing badly and tuition fees are high, the increased financial requirements in relation to studying at some universities affect student enrolment (Dwenger, Storck, and Wrohlich (2009). Similarly, price changes due to inflation rates make it difficult for parents to plan their finances based on their disposable income and savings (Brian, 2001, p. 67). In light of the findings from the literature, it seems logical for universities to act cautiously in relation to raising their tuition fees but also to allow flexible payment schedules if the declining trends in international student enrolment are found to be the result of unilateral

decisions within their mandate. However, Brian (2001) indicated that, while the difference in tuition fees paid by foreign and domestic students, was negligible, living expenses tended to differ based on standard of living.

#### **4.4.5. Hospitable Environment**

The recruitment of international students has meant that the aspect of hospitality has become an issue of national concern in respect to how these students are received, treated, helped, guided and supported. Hospitality, which may be understood as providing a cordial atmosphere and instrumental help (Pancaroglu, 2013), impression or image of the country in question. In this regard Park, Hsieh, and Lee (2017) attest that the international students' image of a destination country is based on what they think and know about the country, the emotions evoked and a general picture that results in the formation of an attitude that influences their final choice. Magnani et al. (2013) offer the view that there is a correlation between a supportive learning environment and the academic and non-academic staff, respect for the principle of equity fairness, and agreed upon principles to nurture students into useful citizens. It is argued that the international students' image of a destination country is also affected by distance from home, personal safety, available social and personal networks, national security, visa concerns, and availability of affordable means of transport and accommodation. Specific to this study, and as highlighted in the quotations below, the hospitable environment in Uganda also informed the international students' choice: "*Actually my choice was because of the hospitality that Uganda is giving South Sudan as a nation* [MAK13 – South Sudanese]. Another added:

*...Actually, what I can say about Ugandans is hospitality because, the first time I met them, I didn't know anyone in Uganda. The taxi driver who picked me really accommodated me. He gave me good hospitality from the airport. When I came to the university the first person I met was a Ugandan... whom I didn't know was our class coordinator. He took me around and showed me different offices and orientated me about the campus so, at least, that is why I really respect Ugandans* [KIU3 – Nigerian].

Another student stated:

*...there is no segregation in Uganda based on nationality and tribalism. They [Ugandans] are so well behaved, when you don't understand anything they are very ready to explain it to you to make you understand and show you, that's why I like them. I feel at home. I have never felt segregated because am a Tanzanian. I have never been mistreated* [MAK9 – Tanzanian].

Clearly evident in the quotations above is the role of diplomatic ties between the countries and also that of hospitality which had informed the students' choice of their study destination and which had resulted in helping the international students to feel accepted and at home. This is in agreement with the findings of Cheng, Wong, and Prideaux (2017, p. 385) that the existing political situation in the country, coupled with other considerations, influence the choice of a destination country. Park et al. (2017, p. 125) highlighted that one major reason why Chinese students travel to study in Japan is due to the positive image and attitude they have of Japan. This view aligns with that of Thompson (2017, p. 78) when she states the choice to migrate is informed by the prospective student's image of various dimensions of life in the destination country, the level of severity of risks and his/her capacity to cope in such situations. In this regard it is argued that an international student with a positive experience of country is likely to recommend this country to his/her associates while the inverse also holds true.

#### **4.5. Flexible Admission System – KIU: Specific Qualitative Findings**

The national education system sets the admission requirements for the different levels of grades, ranging from pre-school to the university level. Thus, the Uganda National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) oversees the functionality of all public and private higher education instruction in Uganda. Included in its roles, as stipulated in the University and Other Tertiary Institutions Act (UATIOA) 2001, as amended in 2003 and 2006, section 5(j), is: “... *to require and ensure that all universities, whether private or public, adhere to minimum criteria set by the National Council for admission to undergraduate and higher degree programmes*”. In line with this requirement it is expected that all HEIs institutions in Uganda will adhere to the legislative demands and demonstrate fair and transparent processes, especially in view of the excess demand over supply in higher education (Kwesiga & Ahikire). Accordingly, universities admit both national and international students based on the same standards. This study established that, although international students with relatively weak grades had gained admission at KIU, they were required to undertake a six month upgrade programme known as access before admission. While this may not apply to all international students, it is, nevertheless, indicative of a systematic weakness which international students take advantage. Evidenced of this is found in the quotation that represents similar revelation thus:

*...The main reason I chose Uganda was I had some problems in my country, Nigeria, I had a pass in English language in my O level exams so I went for a private exam, I passed and was lucky to be admitted to Kanu State University of Science and Technology. I applied for*

*electric engineering and they gave me computer science, I went to register and they demanded my private exam course certificate with a minimum of credit passes. By that time the private exams results were not yet out so I came back home, I had nothing to do and my dad came back home with a brochure of KIU and suggested that I should come here to study so that is how it happened [KIU2 – Nigerian].*

It is clear from the above that poor grades may sometimes not allow admission to universities of the students' choice due to the national enrolment standards in their country. The quotation may implicitly imply that it is easy to gain admission to KIU even when poor results do not guarantee university admission in the home country. In addition, this also highlights the absence of nonexistence of international standards regulating university admission or, if they do, in fact, exist the implementation and monitoring thereof are ineffective. It was intriguing to discover that students who did not qualify for admission in their home country because of their poor results were admitted to the Ugandan higher education system based on the same results despite the fact that the higher education system in Uganda is considered to be of good quality. This raises the urgency to implement the East African Qualification Framework for Higher Education (2015) objectives of harmonization of standards within the East African Member states. This finding supports the observation of Kruss (2007) in respect of private universities that, while there are formal policies and regulations on the university entry criteria, the practice tends to be different in some cases with flexibility being exercised in the admission procedures. Furthermore, such flexibility in the admission criteria tended to be applied to students who enrolled late or who did not a good chance of gaining admission to a public university.

However, to ensure credibility in the application of flexibility in the admission procedures it is recommended that a detailed audit of the validity of the enrolment procedures for the students be carried out (Parry et al., 2006). Lee (2017) found that universities in Korea applied flexible admission procedures which made them an attractive option in relation to Chinese international students' choice of Korea as a study destination. In light of Lee's (2007) findings, Sehoole and Adeyemo (2016) observed that, through their admission criteria, education institutions are agents of government in the sense that they facilitate the fulfilment of the national objective of access to and equity in higher education. It is important to note that flexibility in admission is not confined to private universities but is also practised by public universities in the East African Countries of Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. Onsongo (2009) observe, that in Kenya, the Joint Admission Board (JAB) used its discretion to lower the university admission points to enable girls

to access higher education. A similar flexibility in the admission scheme was exercised by MAK when, on 14 June 1990, the Senate, applying its discretion, passed the 1.5 points scheme to support admission of female student to the university. By 2002, Ugandan female students who were not able to attain the affirmative action support of 1.5 points were supported under a scholarship scheme known as the female scholarship initiative (FSI) with funds from the Carnegie Corporation of New York (Kwesiga & Ahikire, 2006). The scheme was aimed at reducing the shortage of female students in the science based courses. They were given support in the form of tuition fees, accommodation and upkeep.

Since 2002 students at Dar-es Salaam University who fail to attain the required admission points for the faculty of science were introduced to a six month, pre-entry session and, on passing the examination, were allowed to apply for admission to the science courses (Onsongo, 2009). Similar laxity as a pull factor in the recruitment of Chinese international students to Korean institutions was established by Lee (2017). Altbach (2010), cited in Wilkins and Huisman (2011, p. 303), highlighted that, globally, international students, enrolled at branch campuses would not qualify for admission to the same courses on the main campuses but were able to enrol at the branch campuses because of the application of flexibility in admission to the branch campuses. It is observed that, even when clear policy instruments are available, public universities as independent entities, tend apply their discretion in matters of student admission, taking into consideration the need to raise funds to meet their obligations but also national concerns in respect of access to and equity in education. On the other hand, for the private institutions, it would appear that the profit motive overrides other interests. It is argued that, while flexibility in student admission may have short term financial gains for institutions, in the long term such practices may have unforeseen consequences and, therefore, it is essential that caution is exercised in the use of a discretionary mandate in the admission of students.

#### **4.6. Push factors for the Choice of Uganda by International Students**

Push factors in respect of the choice of a destination country in which to study may be said to be a combination of features (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002), or driving force factors (Park, 2009) within the home country that render the country unappealing as a country in which to study but which motivate students to undertake international study. In this study push factors were understood to mean unfavourable educational conditions that compel a person to migrate from home to another destination in search of better educational services that, it is hoped, will satisfy his/her career and



professional needs and expectations. These push factors tend to be context specific and are not standard factors which may be used to explain international student mobility elsewhere. Accordingly, the focus of this study was on establishing the unique pull-push factors that drive international students to study in the East African region and, specifically, in Uganda – an issue that remains unexplored in the literature.

In collating the push factors, detailed and rich descriptions were obtained from the qualitative interviews and data analysis through the application of the international students' voice in an effort to understand the dynamics of the international student experience (Roberts et al., 2009). However, it is important to note that, while there were no pre-set factors in the survey instrument from which the data accessed would have been used to explore these push factors, provision was made for the respondents to note their views on push factors. Accordingly, an elaborate list of responses from international students was recorded and, after analysing the information, key themes emerged for both institutions. This provided useful insights into the push factor theme that could explain the choice of Uganda. In the case of MAK, the push factors that emerged from the survey respondents included longer course duration at home; unavailability of specific courses in the home country, for example, MSc. Population and Reproductive Health, Bachelors and Masters in Procurement Management, Community Psychology and Veterinary Preventive Medicine, conditions attached to offer of a sponsorship, poor quality of education, high cost of education (Kenya) and country at war with Burundi and Sudan (specifically named). The finding on country is at war a push factor speaks to the stable political and security situation in Uganda which international students from countries riddled with conflicts find as a place of refuge but with immense opportunity to further their academic goals.

In the case of KIU, the push factors that emerged from the survey respondents included longer course duration; unavailability of courses in home country although no specific courses stated; sponsorship conditionality; poor quality of education; high cost of education (Zambia); country at war (DRC Congo); English language deficiency and numerous strikes. It may, thus, be seen that, for both MAK and KIU, there was congruency in the push factors that emerged from information derived from the survey instrument. The similar push factors identified for both MAK and KIU included longer course duration, unavailability of courses in home country, sponsorship conditionality, poor quality of education, high cost of education and country at war. Specific push factors for KIU were identified as English language deficiency and numerous strikes. In order to

obtain rich data on the push factors, in-depth interviews were then conducted in both institutions to validate the earlier themes that had emerged from the push factors identified in the survey data collection phase but also to identify other unique themes that may emerge from the qualitative analysis. The data analysed from the MAK interview responses gave rise to four broad push factor themes, namely: academic considerations, family desire and interest, personal ambitions and sponsorship conditionality while the five push factor themes that emerged from the KIU interview responses were: academic, family, personal, sponsorship conditionality and policy related factors. Thus, common themes that emerged from qualitative data for MAK and KIU included academic, sponsorship conditionality, family and personal push factors, which are discussed first, and followed by a discussion on the policy related push factor specific to KIU.

#### **4.6.1. Academic Push Factors**

The finding under this academic theme are presented under the following sub-themes, namely, poor results and the need for improvement, and curriculum factors. The findings are presented in the order of listing starting with the poor high school performance that caused failure to attain admission in higher education institution in home country.

##### **4.6.1.1. Poor Results as a Push Factor**

Good grades in high school is a precondition for admission to a university, regardless of nationality. It is argued that, when the grades attained are not sufficient for university admission, parents and students frantically search for alternatives, for example, repeating the class, start the level anew, taking short courses or searching for institutions that are prepared to accept the students despite their existing grades. The study established that students with relatively poor grades in their home country and who have failed to gain admission in the universities in the home country often look for opportunities to study abroad in order to achieve their professional goals. Altbach (2015) observes that, the high level of competition created by international students has resulted in demand exceeding supply with local students who unable to qualify for local institutions gaining admission to institutions overseas. It appears, thus, that the poor grades act as a push factor for international students to seek study opportunities abroad with parental consent and parental commitment to funding their studies. This is obvious in the quotation below:

*... Going to a university at home is very competitive. It's more competitive than it is here in Uganda. I got average marks back at home and it could not allow me an ordinary university admission which was not my choice ...and when MAK opened up I was excited [MAK7 – Kenyan].*

Thus, it would appear gaining average marks creates anxiety for both the parent and the student and intensive efforts are made to search for placement at another university. In addition, it seemed that such opportunities do present themselves as long as the international student meets the basic minimum admission requirements of the institution in question parents and the student are willing to fulfil the requisite terms and conditions. This finding is in alignment with Odebero's (2015:12) observation that Uganda tends to attract a high number of international students from the region due to its flexible admission requirements and the fact that it allows students with relatively low grades to gain university admission.

#### **4.6.1.2. Unavailability of Course Desired**

Student choices and decision-making in higher education may be viewed on three different levels, namely, global, national, and curriculum. The global level choices relate to study abroad decisions, national level decisions refer to the choice of country in which to study while the curriculum decision relates to the course(s) to be studied. This study established that the non-availability of course and the desire to specialise drive international student to search for universities that offer courses that enhance their professional growth. The finding is in line with the findings of the study by Wilkins et al. (2011) that one reason why international students enrol for international study at branch campuses was to pursue courses not taught in their home countries, thus highlighting the push factor of such courses. In this vein one respondent revealed:

*... my course, Veterinary Preventive Medicine on the African Continent, is offered only in South Africa, Ghana and Uganda. South Africa and Ghana had no vacancy and Uganda was the only choice with a vacancy [MAK14 – Cameroonian].*

Similar concerns on the non-availability of courses were voiced in respect of courses such as: MSc. Population and Reproductive Health, Bachelors and Masters in Procurement Management and Community Psychology. It is argued that, if they want to specialise and if a funding opportunity was available, international students search for countries and institutions that offer their dream courses, as was the case with the above quotation. Lending support to this study finding, Wang and Ho (2014) concluded that the choice of a destination country in which to study made by Taiwanese students majoring in music was influenced by their desire to benefit from the training not available in their country. Furthermore, while Wang and Ho's (2014) study identified three key factors in the students' choice of destination, namely, cost of living expense and academic

and economic dimensions while, curriculum design was rated as the fifth most important push factor on the list of nine factors categorised under the three key dimensions.

#### **4.6.1.2. Perception of Poor Quality of Education in Home Country**

The concept of quality is somewhat complex to explain as is embedded in different education systems in the world. Although the interpretation of quality and standards of education may be subjective to some extent, where there are variables which are acceptable to the stakeholders in the higher education landscape, then using such variables, it becomes possible for any stakeholder to make a judgement as to the quality of education in the country in question. This study established that the parents, sponsors and international students perceived the quality of the education in the home countries to be unsatisfactory while considering the quality of education in Uganda as superior. The following comments reflect the international students' perception of the quality of education as a push factor *"I also asked my sponsor why he had chosen me to be in Uganda, then he said the education in Uganda is far better than that of South Sudan"*[KIU6 – South Sudanese]. In addition a respondent revealed, *"... and among all the neighbouring countries Uganda is somehow better when it comes to education, so that's why I came"*[MAK7 – Kenyan].

When international students engage in a new learning environment, they make comparisons between the teaching styles deployed during the learning processes. It emerged that the learner-centred approach through individual project work, group discussions, research projects, self-study and workshops are prominent. The participants mentioned large volumes of work but felt that they had gained much from the search for knowledge (Wong, 2004). For example, the respondent cites the realisation of capacity gaps after having being exposed to a research methods curriculum, which knowledge they lacked when they engaged with home country curriculum. On this aspect, a participant commented:

*... in that area of Atlas I also learnt there were a lot of things I was lacking. In terms of research, when I arrived here, I realised that there was something missing somewhere ... how to write a problem statement. I have now been taught and am able to identify a research gap ... those critical areas* [MAK14 – Cameroonian].

This quotation highlights the realisation of the observed difference in capacity at home and in Uganda. Similarly, it illustrates the value international students attach to acquiring competence in the study discipline of study and the euphoria that comes with gaining those competencies.

#### **4.6.1.3. Long Course Duration and Heavy Content**

World over, the field of education is highly controlled hence the educational systems vary in terms of organisational structures, pedagogical practices and philosophical orientation. The course content, which is a reflection of the approved curriculum in a national education system, is the content that HEI deliver to learners in order to meet their academic and professional needs and expectations. Taking in to account that education systems differ, the respondents provided comparative assessment of their current and home country lived experience in relation to their academic load which reflected the nature of the approved curriculum. A comment which emerged from the survey data collection made by a Kenyan respondent from MAK provided a vivid illustration of difference in curriculum design and period of study as follows: *Back in my country education system is somewhat long and expensive in terms of the duration for the completion of course.* Similar comments were also made:

*In Nigeria, where I come from, studying information technology takes five years to complete but, in Uganda, it is going to take me three years to complete my bachelor education [KIU8 – Nigerian].*

*... like in the University of Kinshasa where I was, I had to spend two years doing basic physic, too much maths before you start training hands on ... I wanted to do civil engineering but I left the university without even starting the engineering content. We were so much in the basics [KIU14 – DRC-Congo].*

It is clear from the above comments that the students had a conceptual understanding of what a quality course content should be although Herlina et al. (2017) observed that there are international students who lack knowledge on the course they wish to follow. For example, on the issue of course content, Jaja (2013) revealed that in, higher education in Nigeria, the course curriculum is deficient and not taught in its entirety; nor are the courses comprehensively delivered due to a number of factors while the courses taught also do not prepare the students for life beyond the campus among. It is argued that, based on such observed inadequacies and wishing to obtain quality education, international students seek countries in which the curricula meet their academic and professional expectations

#### **4.6.2. Sponsorship Conditionalities**

Although, in the quantitative findings, the receipt of government funding was rated at the bottom of all pull factors with MAK posting a mean = 1.14 and a SD = 0.85) and KIU a mean = 1.15 and a SD = 0.58); very strong views were voiced in the qualitative interviews indicating the influence

which sponsor wield as a push factor. This study established that the international students' choice of Uganda as a destination country was, in fact, determined by their sponsors, thus highlighting the influence which funders wield over the international students choice of destination country. This finding is supported by the earlier scholarly work of Roberts et al. (2009) which established that the conditionality of scholarships offered by the Taiwanese government was a key push factor for the Chinese international students' choice of Taiwan as a study country. Relating relevant literature to this study, the data from the responses which was analysed alluded to the reality of sponsor influence as respondents had the following to say: "... it was the plan of my sponsor so, because of that, he told me to come to Uganda. He collected the application form from the net and made me apply to KIU and is paying for me [KIU6 – South Sudanese]. Another student revealed: "Well, the basic reason for choosing Uganda is also similar to the basic reasons why I chose MAK – the scholarship that I got [MAK12 – Rwandese].

*The issue is I had a scholarship in Uganda ... and was required to migrate from my own country to another African country ... and, secondly, the programme I decided to do is only at MAK among all the universities in Uganda [MAK14 – Cameroonian].*

*It was an opportunity to study outside my country ...and, when I tried to talk to my sponsors and relatives, they said Uganda is the closest country you can go to... and Uganda doing well [KIU14 – DRC Congo].*

As observed in the quotations above, it would appear that the international students' study destination were the decision and choice of their sponsors. This finding seems to suggest that the driving force that propels the sponsors to make the condition that the scholarship is for study in Uganda is their perception of the low quality of the education in the international students' home countries. It may, however, also be that a lack of capacity in the home country influence the sponsors decisions about where the students may study. This is supported by Kruss's (2007) observation that, as a result of the limited ability of the national education system to meet the growing demand for skills, the Botswana government provides tuition fees and accommodation cost to enable its nationals to study in South Africa.

Similarly, sponsor influence in the choice of study country was highlighted in the study conducted by Ozoglu (2015) and established that the number of international students enrolled in Turkish universities had increased because of its scholarship programme – "the Grand Students Project. Scholarships were offered to both nationals and international students as part of a broad

government strategy to promote friendship with the former Soviet Union community and popularise the Turkish culture and language. It is, however, argued that, while sponsors do exercise influence in the decision about the study country, students, too, have a strong interest in taking up scholarship offers for study abroad to enable them to experience academic life in a different context. This, in fact, applied to me when an opportunity for sponsorship was offered to me as I had long wanted to do my PhD outside of Uganda and, thus, despite the fact that the condition was that the study country would be South Africa and the university the University of Pretoria, I welcomed the opportunity because it suited my long standing desire to study outside of Uganda. While the offer of a scholarship with certain conditions attached was found to be a push factor in this study, this is not in line with the finding of Waldegiogis and Doevenspeck (2015) that the offer of a scholarship was a pull factor in respect of the choice of study destination. This difference could, perhaps, be explained by the difference in the context of the scholarship providers.

#### **4.6.3. Family Push Factors**

Hercog and Van de Laar (2017) aver that moving abroad for studies is a very important family decision given the vital role of parents in providing moral and financial support. Accordingly, family interest tends to take precedence over individual desires. This study established that perception of a good education for a family member was a key driving factor in respect of supporting a family member for study abroad. Notwithstanding the associated costs, families often invest in their children's education abroad in the hope of achieving improved social economic conditions after the completion of the studies. Below is the respondent's comment from the interviews which speaks to this desire and revealed:

*... one of my dad's colleague's son was above me and had already graduated from high school and his dad had secured an admission for him here in Uganda so my dad told me that "Son, if you can pass your final year exams very well you will be able to join your colleague down there in Uganda". So I took this as a good opportunity and I wrote my exams and it came out very well and I obtained admission to KIU [KIU7 – Nigerian].*

The quotation above alludes to the importance which family members attach to building the capacity of a family member with an expectation of that family member making a contribution to the wellbeing of the family after completion of his/her studies. Jæger and Gram (2017) posit that families regard study abroad as a channel through which they may achieve social recognition and upward social mobility in the community as a result of the anticipated value of future employment.

However, Pimpa (2003) is of the view that family expectations are much stronger in relation to doctoral students as compared to undergraduate and master's students.

#### **4.6.4. Personal Push Factors**

The desire to achieve academic and professional goals often creates anxiety and propels the international students into action to search for a country and institution through which their ambitions may be achieved. This study established that international students regard study abroad as an opportunity to take control of their lives, discover their potential and survive away from their parents and broader family members. In line with this finding, one respondent revealed that:

*...I wanted to be away from the family and see how I can grow on my own. Yeah, be alone, see and survive on my own. I wanted to be different from the family because most of us have been in Nairobi University and everyone is going there but it's not all of us who have been to MAK. Yeah, so it was kind of a legacy I was creating for myself in terms of, after graduation, they will say "My son who went to MAK". In addition to becoming a journalist, I wanted to establish a following in Uganda because, if you look at journalism in Kenya, it's above Uganda, it's somehow high so I wanted to make a name for myself from here so that, by the time I go to that side, at least I will have left something of this side ...[MAK5 – Kenyan].*

The findings appear to indicate that, from the onset, the international students know what they want to be as they seek to achieve the independence and fulfil their childhood dreams. In relation to this finding Marginson (2014) contends that international students have a conceptual academic and professional image of themselves that they want to achieve but that they will only attain it by engaging in a transformation process through disengaging from their parents' control and developing individual capacity to follow their path in life. It is argued that, when parents see the need for their children to be educated abroad and they are willing to meet the cost, their children, who have a strong personal desire to move away from, take advantage of the available opportunities. They engage in a frantic search for information to facilitate the decision process with the intention of fulfilling their inner desire for independence.

#### **4.6.5. Country at war**

The African continent continues to experience unprecedented levels and magnitude of conflicts between and among countries causing inevitable migration of people to other countries considered



welcoming and safe to live (Onyango, 2013). Countries in the great Lakes region namely Rwanda, Burundi, DRC Congo, Uganda, Tanzania, Malawi; and other like South Sudan and Somalia have had a share of the effect of such conflicts. Exant literature source indicates the the great lakes region is the most punctured region with conflicts. For instance, there are civil and political war in Burundi and DRC; while Kenya experienced post election conflicts in 2007, the Uganda Vs greater Sudan , and Uganda Vs Rwanda clashes in Kishangan in 1998 (Onyango, 2013). The effects of such conflicts have heightened migration in the region including students. However, given its location and relative peace and security, Uganda for a long time has been a receipt of migrants from other countries as refugees or asylum seekers. Destinations countries with civil and political freedoms provide greater international student's inflows illustrated the centrality of politics in international student's dynamics (Perkins and Neumayer ,2013,p.251). A stable and predictable political environment is a yard stick for decision to study in a country as exemplified in this citation:

*...politically the country is stable... [MAK14-Cameroonian].*

Because of its stable political and secure living conditions “Uganda has become a new destination where 41,515 Somali refugee have settled since 2014 and engage income generating activities and acquire academic qualification (Iazzolino,2014,p.1). Aligned to the desire for education, Dryden-Peterson (2015) study: *‘The educational Experiences of Refugee Children in countries of First asylum’* shows that 168 children from DRC Congo were in the Uganda education system as asylum seekers. Validating the choice of Uganda as a destination country, among others a respondent revealed:’

*....my country is at war. ... and its education is better than in South Sudan. Uganda has good cooperation with South Sudan, and people are more comfortable in Uganda than other countries. Ugandans are non segregative but good people... that's why my sponsor decided that I come and study Uganda [KIU6-South Sudanese].*

The citation indicates that home country political and security situations creates anxiety and unceertainty among parents and their children to seek a better place and country to pesue academic goals. The extracts speakes to the hospitality and the generous open door policy that GOU operates and is acknowledged as the “leading refugee hosting nation in Africa and third biggest in the world” (UNDP, 2017, p.3). Uganda through its'citizens' hospitality offers a great opportunity to

international students with the desire to attain educational qualifications. Its proximity to the countries in the EAC community and great lakes region presents an advantage coupled with the national and institutional policies that motivate student's in-bound migration.

#### **4.6.6. Policy-related Push Factors**

National education policies determine a country's education system and demand that higher education institutions adhere to the standards set in their daily operations. Such national policies that have a direct bearing on students' desires, aspirations and expectations in life. Policies that directly impinge on the international students' educational goals relate to: the language of instruction (LOI) adopted in education institutions, admission requirements at each level of study, curriculum and course duration, and assessment strategies. Dissatisfaction with domestic education policy requirements occasionally determine outward bound student mobility (Kahanec & Králiková, 2011). According to the OECD (2011), countries in which the main spoken languages are English, French, German, Spanish and/or Russian tend to be very attractive to international students. Moreover, Altbach (2007, 2013) and Zheng (2010) attest that English is considered as a lingua franca in academic engagement as well as a key push factor to study abroad in the international students' quest to improve their English competency. Odebero (2015) claims that Kenyan students with lower marks seek and attain admission to Ugandan Universities. Yet (World Bank, 2004) indicates that the Kenyan Commission of Higher Education requires a student to be admitted in a University when he/she attains an average score of C+ and above. Similarly, an education system that students see as unnecessarily long motivates migration to other countries. In light of this assertion, extant literature indicates that within the EAC countries, the Kenyan education system is considered long, costly and wasteful (Odebero, 2011). Based on home country education policies and system, the quotations highlight the frustrations students often experienced with their national policies in meeting their desires, aspirations and expectations. In respect to stringent admission requirements for admission, respondents revealed:

*I was not admitted in the university I applied for. The reason was I did not meet their admission requirement. I had nothing to do. My dad, a Professor of History in one of our universities came back home with a brochure from KIU that I should come here to study, so that is how it happened [KIU2 – Nigerian]*

*...joining a university at home is very competitive .Its more competitive than it is here in Uganda so I got average marks back at home so it could not afford me an ordinary University which was not my choice..... and when MAK opened up I was equally excited*  
[MAK7:Kenyan]

The desire to improve on English language as the first reason for choice of Uganda was repeatedly mentioned by the respondents [KIU5, 14 – DRC]; [KIU9 – Rwanda] and KIU10, 11 – Somalia]. Similarly, the desire to undertake a course within a short time emerged and among others, a respondent revealed:

*From our education system back in my country , normally when you are going to study IT actually you have to spend like 5 years but that the course here is taking a short time*  
[KIU8-Nigerian],

The quotations above illustrate the concerns related to national policy in respect of meeting the admission requirements, desire to acquire or improve English language, course duration among others. It is argued that the international students' dissatisfaction with national policy is context-specific based on their current, but unique, academic situations which create the need to resolve the problem through a study abroad programme.

#### **4.7. Summary of Findings**

This chapter contained a presentation and a discussion of the study findings. In order of importance the chapter identified the international students' pull factors in respect of the two institutions as different in ranking although similar. In the case of MAK the international students' pull factors were identified as opportunity for academic research in Uganda, the expectation of finding better future job after acquiring Ugandan education, other factors, desire to improve English language ability, location of Uganda close to home country, lower cost of living in Uganda, easy visa processing in Uganda, political stability and safety as compared to the home country and the desire to experience Ugandan culture. The pull factors identified but which were less important in the choice of Uganda were identified as family and friends in Uganda, advice from professor/teacher/councillor to study in Uganda, getting away from home and the receipt of government funding to study in Uganda.

Specific to KIU the pull factors identified in order of importance in respect of the choice of Uganda included an easier visa processing, desire to improve English language ability, expectation of a

better future job with a Ugandan education, opportunity for academic research, political stability and safety as compared to home country, lower cost of living, family and friends in Uganda and a desire to experience Ugandan culture. In addition, and in a sequential order, the study established pull factors that contributed less to pull international students to Uganda as proximity to home country, advice from professors/lecturers/counsellor, getting away from home and receipt of a government scholarship. The qualitative findings complemented the pull factors identified from the survey data. The themes that emerged as pull factors in the case of MAK included political and geographical considerations, socio-cultural factors, family and parental influence and economics specifically tuition fees and cost of living, while flexible university admission system and hospitable environment emerged as pull factors from the KIU qualitative analysis. This study pull-push factors support the assertion that, although push factors are often responsible for students' decision to leave their home country, it is the variation in the pull factors that are widely seen as determining the direction of the student mobility (Thielemann, 2012).

## **Chapter Five**

### **Factors in Choice of Makerere and Kampala International Universities**

#### **5.1. Introduction**

Student choices and decision-making in the international higher education landscape may be viewed at three different levels, namely, global, national, and institutional. The global level choices relate to the decision to study abroad, at the national level they involve the choice of the country in which to study while, at the institutional level, the focus is on the preferred university (Wilkins & Huisman, 2011). Informed by the most popular push-pull theoretical framework in international students' decision-making processes, developed initially by McMahon (1992) and confirmed by Mazzarol and Soutars (2002) and other scholars, this study applied the pull factor framework as used by these two scholars that pull factors oscillate within a destination country, thus making the country more appealing than others as a location in which to engage in academic work and live. The findings presented and discussed here addressed the question: What are the pull factors that motivate international students to choose the university they are attending? The findings, which were based on two institutions, namely, MAK and KIU, were intended to gain an understanding of the respondents' opinion about the research objective. Chapter four presented and discussed the pull factors in respect of the choice of Uganda as a destination country. The identifier codes for the respondents, as used in Chapter four, are also used in this chapter. However, it is important to note that, when analysing contents of the tables and figures presented in this chapter, it became clear that, in most cases, the actual number of responses differed from number of responses expected because not all the students had filled in all questions in the survey instrument. Nevertheless, each table and figure in this chapter indicate the actual number of responses provided in the survey findings. Findings specific to MAK are presented first and thereafter the findings related to KIU.

#### **5.2. Makerere University Pull Factors**

In line with the factors enlisted in the survey instrument, the data analysed provided the perspectives furnished by the international students in respect of the factors/dimensions that had informed their choice of Makerere University. Their opinions, as were sought for unscaled dimension, were integrated into the narrative together with the outcomes of the analysis of the data from the in-depth interviews. This integration of the findings resulted in an enriched understanding

which was superior to that which would have resulted if only one method of data collection and analysis had been deployed in the study.

**Table 5. 2: Descriptive statistics for international students’ pull factors in the choice of Makerere University**

S/N	Question	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q.5.1	This was the best university to which I was able to gain admission.	2.84	1.07
Q.5.2	I was offered financial assistance.	2.14	1.30
Q.5.3	Opportunity for research with a professor.	1.95	1.11
Q.5.4	Classes in English.	2.42	1.23
Q.5.5.	I just wanted to study in Uganda	1.43	0.80
Q.5.6	My professor/teacher/counsellor advised me to study at MAK	2.07	1.04
Q.5.7	I was interested in a specific educational programme	2.90	1.00
Q.5.8	Better quality of higher education as compared to my own country	2.85	1.16
Q.5.9	Geographical location in Uganda	2.10	1.07
Q.5.10	Others	2.25	1.09

**Source:** MAK Primary data

As Table 5.1 indicates, MAK posted an average mean score of 2.08 among the factors listed and a standard deviation of 0.41. The data analysis involved the analytic hierarchy process (AHP) approach (Dahari & Abduh, 2011) as well as the 80:20% rule that ranked factors on the level of importance and influence based on the international students’ opinions in respect of their choice of MAK – see Table below.

**Table 5. 3: Categorisation of the importance of the pull factors in the choice of Makerere University.**

S/N	Factor	Mean	% Mean	Cum% Mean
Q.5.7	I was interested in a specific educational programme.	2.90	13%	13%
Q.5.8	Better quality of higher education as compared to my home country	2.85	12%	25%
Q.5.1	This was the best university to which I was able to gain admission.	2.84	12%	37%
Q.5.4	Classes in English.	2.42	11%	48%
Q.5.10.	Others.	2.25	10%	58%
Q.5.2	I was offered financial assistance	2.14	9%	67%
Q.5.9	Geographical location in Uganda	2.10	9%	76%
<b>Q.5.6</b>	<b>My professor/teacher/counsellor advised me to study at MAK</b>	<b>2.07</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>85%</b>
<b>Q.5.3</b>	<b>Opportunity for research with a professor</b>	<b>1.95</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>94%</b>
<b>Q.5.5</b>	<b>I just wanted to study in Uganda</b>	<b>1.43</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source:** MAK analysed survey data.

As indicated in Table 5.2 above and based on the mean scores for each factor, the findings indicated, in order of importance and influence, the factors that the international students had considered in their choice of MAK, namely, I was interested in a specific programme, desire for better quality of education as compared to home country, it was the best university to which I was able to gain admission, conducted in English, other factors [which are explained in the details in the report], offer of financial assistance, and geographical location in Uganda. Factors that were of less importance and influence in the choice of MAK included my professor/teacher/counsellor advised me to study at MAK, opportunity for research with a professor and I just wanted to study in Uganda. In order to derive a deeper meaning out of the statistically derived rankings extensive reference to the qualitative data is made in respect of each of the factors ranked. Each of the factors is discussed in the next sections in order of importance and influence.

### **5.2.1. Desire to Enrol in a Specific Education Programme**

The most thought about factor and influential factor in the international students' choice of MAK (M = 2.90, SD = 1.00) was the wish to enrol in a specific education programme. This implied that the international students placed a high value on enrolling for a course that would assist them to achieve their professional and career aspirations. Chuang and Dellmann (2010) posit that a student's interest in a course of study is a reflection of his/her career dream or aspiration, based on the anticipated rewards and fulfilment associated with the course. It is argued that this is an area

on which universities should focus when developing courses and programmes that meet the international students' aspirations and enable them to compete in the labour market. Similarly, I contend that students with a clear cut desire for a career will not take any course of study for the sake of it but will search for the educational institution where the course is offered in order to fulfil their academic and career aspirations. In this vein, a respondent in the survey revealed his choice of MAK as follows: *“Mainly it's because the course MSc. in Population and Reproductive Health (the combination) is the one in which I was interested in and it was offered at MAK”*. Another student opined that: *“The programme I wanted to study [Veterinary Preventive Medicine] is offered in Uganda but only at MAK ... [R14: MAK – Cameroonian]*. A similar desire to pursue courses of interest as an attraction to MAK were mentioned in respect of Bachelors and Masters in Procurement Management and Community Psychology. The students' statements are validated in the MAK Strategic Plan 2018/2019-2018-2019 as follows: *“Attraction of international staff and students is, in some cases, dependent on the unique aspects of the university curricula that are not easily attainable elsewhere”*. This finding aligns with that of Wilkins and Huisman (2011) who reported that international students' choice of a branch campus in the UK was influenced by the content of the courses offered. Similar findings were noted on the availability of an academic programme as a very important factor attracting Malaysian international students to a university (Ming, 2010); and the most important factor considered by post graduate students in their choice of a Malaysian University (Dahari & Abduh 2011). On the contrary, however, although in the different context of domestic higher education, Sá et al. (2012, p. 661) reported that availability of a wide range of courses was not an influential factor which prospective Dutch students considered in their choice of a domestic university at which to study. Despite the variations in the findings as indicated in the literature cited, the contribution of this study is that it has illuminated factors that international students considered in their choice of Makerere University, thus contributing to filling the information gap in existing literature on international students' mobility.

### **5.2.2. Desire to Achieve Better Quality of Education**

In the order of importance, the analysed survey findings (Table:4.2) indicate the international students' desire to achieve a better quality of higher education as compared to that offered in their home countries ( $M = 2.65$ ,  $SD = 1.08$ ) as the second most important and influential factor which was considered in the choice of MAK as a study institution. This finding agrees with earlier research by Bodycott (2009), Padlee et al. (2010); and Wilkins and Huisman (2011) that the



perception of the quality of the education offered by a university tends to be an influential factor which international students take into account in their choice of learning institutions abroad. In relation to the choice of a university students are primarily interested in acquiring the appropriate academic credentials and competencies that will enhance their social status and economic capacity. In support of the survey findings, during the interviews extensive and repeated reference was made to the quality of education as a factor which had been considered in selecting MAK. The quotation below expresses a view similar to other views which emphasised the importance of the quality of education offered:

*...I do journalism and communication and I also have an interest in film making so I knew that, for me, to become a professional and stand out I needed a university which was renowned and offered a curriculum that would meet my expectations. MAK was the best I said "Let me go to MAK because I know there are professionals there". On arrival here I was not disappointed because the people who are teaching me are already in the field, I see their work so I emulate them [MAK7 – Kenyan].*

Another student stated:

*My choice of MAK was because of its good academic stability, it's one of the best in Africa in terms of academic ranking...the lecturers and the system of teaching are ok for me... so. in that regard, I had to come here [MAK14 – Cameroonian].*

*... it offers quality education ... like the kind of education we are getting from MAK is more practical and makes students more practical when they get out there [MAK2 - Kenyan].*

*... the way you entered Makerere is not the way you will get out. You will change because you will have learnt a lot. You will come out when you are a better man [MAK3 - Burundian].*

The quotations above all provide evidence of the international students' strong desire to attain internationally recognised academic qualifications together with the requisite competence and skills that would ensure that they were relevant and competitive in the global employment market. Implicit in the quotations are silent indications of the quality education offered at MAK. In addition, the quotations also attest to the more specialised skills which are imparted and the problem solving oriented academic programmes that meet the needs of the students (MAK Strategic Plan Review Report, 2017) While there is unanimity that the quality of higher education must to be preserved (Altbach, Reisberg & Rumbley, 2009), Ali et al. (2016) warn that higher

education quality is a controversial issue to define or agree upon given the multiplicity of stakeholders involved by a higher education institution.

Van Ginkel and Dias (2007) describe quality in higher education as a multi-faced concept that ought to include all its operations, namely, teaching and learning schedules, research and scholarship, academic and non-academic staff, student affairs services, physical infrastructure, community engagement, and academic environment. Whereas it would appear that the literature is divided on the concept of quality in higher equality, in this study it seemed that the international students' desire to attain quality education was informed by the ultimate expectation of realising academic and professional goals inspecific discipline for which a strong foundation is a necessity. It is argued that the fact that international students made the choice to study at MAK indicates that they perceived it to be an institution that provided an opportunity for them to achieve their career and professional aspirations. This claim is supported by Altbach and McGill-Peterson (2008) in their argument that, regardless of their source of funding, (government, family, self, a sponsor) international students will always gravitate towards countries and institutions they consider to offer opportunities that satisfy their academic and professional expectations. In this respect, therefore, even when receipt of government funding as a pull factor to Uganda received the lowest rating ( $M = 1.41$ ,  $SD = 0.85$ ) (Chapter 4, Table 4.3) the survey findings revealed that 67 (63%) respondents of the 106 respondents who answered the question on major source of funding indicated personal/family as their major source of funding and that these students were enrolled at MAK, thus affirming Altbach and McGill-Peterson's (2008) claim. Jansson, Bukuliki, and Hojer (2017) support the reality of limited state scholarships to domestic students at MAK, indicating that the cost of their education is met by family members – a phenomenon not dissimilar to the plight of international students as revealed in the findings of this study. My argument, which is premised on family and parents as the main source of funding for MAK students, is that, when the international students aspire to quality education service, the non-availability of government financial support to achieve their academic and professional expectations are inconsequential as long as they find ways in which to meet the cost.

### **5.2.3. Best University to which I could Obtain Admission**

Informed by the analysis of the survey data (Table: 4.3), it emerged that the third most important and influential factor considered in the choice of MAK as a study institution was the perception

that it was the best university to which to gain admission ( $M = 2.84$ ,  $SD = 1.07$ ). This finding resonates with MAK's strategic direction and focus as illustrated in its vision and mission statements. In the Makerere University Strategic Plan (2008/2009–2018/2019) the vision of Makerere University is expressed as “to be the leading institution for academic excellence and innovations in Africa” while the mission is “to provide innovative teaching, learning, research and services responsive to national and global needs”. This is further affirmed by the MAK Visitation Committee Report (2016) that indicated that the Times Higher Education (THE) World University Ranking had ranked Makerere University as the third highest ranked university in Africa in 2017, after the University of Cape Town and the University of Witwatersrand. This, then, aligns to the statement that “this was the best university to which I could gain admission”. In this vein Jolanda et al. (2008, p. 876) opine that students choose high profile universities that they know offer higher status and satisfying employment after graduation. Lending support to the survey finding are the quotations from the interviews that attest to how MAK is regarded highly as an institution to which to gain admission. The respondents had the following to say:

*... above all, I had also had good information about Makerere University. Of it being a leading university in East and Central Africa. I think, by then, it was, like, No.3 in the African ranking and also in the world ranking it was around .... I thought it would be an advantage for me to go through MAK to get all the knowledge, socialise with very many guys and, truly, I have done it [MAK1- Kenyan].*

*... and when interacting with people I noticed, even the colleagues I had in my school and ... from other schools were all aiming at this prestigious institution [MAK7- Kenyan]*

*...I knew MAK was the best university in Uganda, maybe in the whole region in East and Central Africa. I had a brother who studied here as well so he made sure I did advanced level, passed well with points that could earn me a degree from MAK which is recognised the world over [MAK13 – South Sudanese].*

The quotations above provide clear evidence of the joy of being associated with the greatness of MAK. This excitement is in line with concept of a flagship (national) university, given MAK's significance and strategic position in the academic domain in curriculum development in distinct disciplines; knowledge creation and dissemination and a centre of political development coupled with its social and economic power in the transformation of the citizens (Tefera, 2015). Tefera (2015) further illuminates that flagship universities are recognised as the oldest, largest in physical size and the number of course offered, most conservative, leading and prominent among other

institutions and at the apex of the national education system within their countries. Meeting these criteria MAK had, over the years, made its mark as the best university in Uganda, in the region and on the African continent (MAK Visitation Committee Report, 2016). Jansson et al. (2017) posit that, despite the fact that the government of Uganda has established more universities since 1988, Makerere University remains the dominant university, highly regarded university and seen by students as their first choice before they even consider applying to other universities. Its dominant position is vividly captured in the respondent's revelation that "*for everyone MAK has to be the best choice and option among the best universities in East Africa so I came and applied ... I joined MAK because it's a good institution* [MAK3 – Burundian]. It is argued that MAK will retain its dominance as the best university among Ugandan universities for many years to come given its strategic focus and the research agenda laid out in its current strategic plan 2008/2009–2018/2019 as well as the high level of partnerships and collaborations with domestic and international institutions in diverse fields.

#### **5.2.4. Classes Conducted in English**

The national education policy determines the language of instruction used in teaching and learning. As established earlier in Chapter four (Table:4.3), one of the reasons international students are attracted to Uganda is their desire to learn English with a similar reason being given for the attraction and choice of MAK as a study institution. In the analysis of the survey findings, the fact that classes are offered in English ( $M = 2.42$ ,  $SD = 1.23$ ) emerged as the fourth most important and influential pull factor in the choice of MAK after the desire to enrol for a specific programme, achieve a better quality education and MAK being the best university to which to gain admission. Commenting on the importance of the English language, one respondent made a comparative analysis of the Uganda and Kenyan class experience as follows:

*... back at home we speak so much Kiswahili, so much of it even is school but, here in Uganda, there is a lot of English spoken, let alone in the university set up. Even some people selling vegetables speak to you in English so you become [familiar] with the dialect and, with that, your English improves a lot. So, the fact that we are doing it on a daily basis, speaking English on a daily basis, has really improved something in me which the other side [Kenyan] are really struggling with ...* [MAK7 – Kenyan].

*... in Cameroon, because of the language barrier, I had problems because of the language barrier. A lecturer would come to class and speaks/teach in French and I am not fluent in French ...which means I would not acquire more ... When I came here, because I am an*

*English speaker, I can share with the lecturers, lecturers here are very open minded people to whom I can go to anytime and knock at their office doors. ... [MAK14 - Cameroonian].*

These quotations provide clear evidence of the central position of English as a language of instruction, not only at MAK, but also in HEIs the world over. The attraction to MAK as a choice of study institution because its English language policy is not unusual. According to Altbach (2013), the English language has dominated the academic world with academic staff members wishing to grow in their careers required to publish in English by the major, recognised publishing houses who set the tone and referencing style to adopt. Universities are ranked according to the quality and volume of publications in English that appear in peer reviewed journals with a high scientific citation index. In addition, most of the world websites and scientific networks used English, scientific conferences and workshops are conducted in English, it is the second most studied language globally and its use is approved in the many national education policy and system as the official language of instruction. In addition, academic journals and books are published in English, curricula, partnerships and collaborations use English, and a number of privately conducted English courses are presented in non-English speaking countries. In light of these considerations, as illuminated by Altbach (2013), it is apparent that international students are bound to search for an institution with an international recognition at which to register for a study programme in the expectation of attaining quality education that will equip them for the global employment. MAK has been conducting classes in English since 1922 when it started as a technical college under colonial rule. Since then it has admitted international students from the region and continues to use English as a language of instruction (Jansson et al., 2017). It would probably not be realistic to expect MAK to conduct classes in any language other than English when it was a British colony for a long time. Considering that *“English increasingly belongs to the world rather than to any one country”* (Bohara, 2018, p.90) and its global influence is advancing rather than backsliding which speaks to its hegemonic nature in international engagement. The , power, dominance and significance of the English language in a global environment is summed up in the quote *“One who has the better competence and performance in English language can be the citizen of the world and do have the better chances of living, trekking, studying, employment, trading, mutual friendship and socialization across and around the world”* (Bohara, 2018, p.92). Its this desire to be global citizens that drive international students to undertake courses delivered in

English as a strategy to improve their competence and competitiveness in the interational employment market.

### **5.2.5. Other Factors**

In the survey findings, the category of other factors ( $M = 2.25$ ,  $SD = 1.09$ ) were found to be the fifth most important and influential factor in the choice of MAK. These other factors were identified as independent of those listed in the survey instrument but emerged when the respondents were asked to provide any other reasons for their choice of MAK. These other factors included the following: MAK was cheaper than other universities in Uganda, the influence of the important people it has produced, the remarkable innovations taking place at MAK, opportunity for networking, love for Makerere University, opportunity to learn local languages, the prevailing peace in Uganda and the opportunity to enjoy the favourable weather in Uganda. In the qualitative findings, aspects of these factors appear in some of the quotations, thus validating their existence and influence as had been established in the survey findings. For example, in regard to MAK being cheaper than other universities in Uganda, a respondent shared his experience as:

*... when I finished my A level I wanted to study journalism or education. I had only two choices, either MAK or the Uganda Christian University (UCU) to do journalism there. So, at UCU the tuition fees were higher and the only option was to try MAK. So, I came to MAK. I had fair points but qualified for the journalism course. So, I was lucky to get the opportunity and that is how I enrolled for the course [MAK6 – Kenyan].*

However, another respondent provided a broader perspective on the cost of tuition fees in his response that was comparative in nature. He stated:

*... tuition, if you compare other countries, compared to Kenya you pay \$3000 every semester which is kind of expensive compared to Uganda. And also that's why I came and applied here in Uganda, especially at MAK [MAK3 – Burundian].*

It is clear that the affordability of tuition fees is an important and influential factor which the international students had considered in their choice of MAK. This finding is support by Odebero (2015) who highlighted that Uganda is a destination country for cross border higher education largely because of the low cost of education attributed to the lower tuition fees charged as compared to Kenya and Tanzania. In this regard the views from the survey, quotations from interviews and findings from the literature are all congruent in respect of the role played by the lower tuition fees charged at MAK and Uganda. This is in line with Yu's (2016) study that reported

international students' choice of a university in Malaysia was based on the affordability of its tuition fees.

Included in the other factors that attracted international students to MAK was a view expressed in the survey data that spoke to the influence of the important people who had studied at MAK as a reason for choice of MAK. The interview data validated this finding as is clear in this quotation:

*... and another thing that encouraged me, from home most of the big people, big public officers, used to study at Makerere here, the likes of Mwai Kibaki and senators, some of them are products of MAK [MAK2 – Kenyan].*

*... one of our presidents and a number of big people in Kenya have studied here so it created more desire for me to be part of the history” [MAK4 – Kenyan].*

In line with the revelation of the important people who had studied at MAK, MAK's annual report (2013, p. 5) indicated that, in recognition of Anyang Nyong'o as the first international student to be elected a guild president of MAK in 1970 and the brainchild of the Makerere Africa Lecture Series, Professor Anyang Nyong'o, a Member of Parliament and Minister of Medical Service in the Kenyan government, was invited to present the 1st and 4th lectures at the Makerere Africa Celebrations on 2 December 2011 which raised the profile and public image of MAK. Given the frequent references to the important people produced by MAK by the international students, it is argued that such events, which are highly publicised in state media, caught the attention of some international students and motivated and attracted them to enrol at MAK in anticipation of becoming important and powerful in future. Among other prominent alumni of MAK are Mwalimu Julius Kambarage Nyerere, first president of Tanzania (1962–1985), Benjamin Makapa, third President of Tanzania (1995–2005), Paul Kagame, President of Rwanda (2000–to date), Ngugi wa Thiongo, a renowned Kenyan novelist and author, and Joseph Kabila, President of DRC-Congo (2001–to date). I contend that with such a line up of prominent alumni, it is expected that an ambitious and focused student would look to such personalities as their role models and that this would impact on their choices and generate a desire to follow their academic footsteps.

Rawana, Sieukaran, Nguyen, and Pitawanakwat (2015) observe that elders and community members act as mentors to the young generation through transmitting appropriate values and knowledge through teaching and inculcating acceptable behaviours. This sociological principle also applies in the academic environment where guest speakers and the key note addresses they deliver function as mentorship activities to novices with the most senior and experienced faculty

members passing on academic values, traditions and approaches in a group context. The act of inviting Prof Anyang Nyong'o speaks to this mentorship drive as it generates a desire of the young people to emulate the success achieved.

A further factor under the category of the other factors named were the outstanding innovations taking place at MAK as an important reason for the choice of MAK. Implicit in this revelation is an interest in both the scientific and applied research output of the university professors. Yu (2016) asserts that the image of a university is a function of the remodelled and rebranded professors who engage in cutting edge research output that gives the university a highly comparative and competitive advantage over its peers. It is argued that such innovations and research output ignite a change in the outlook of the university among its internal and external stakeholders, in particular the current and prospective students, partners and collaborators, the business community and government. In addition, when the more relevant research innovations and outputs contribute to solving community problems, this attracts more support from stakeholders and motivates more students with the desire to be part of the university's success story. The respondents described the motivation for professional growth as follows:

*...MAK has spurred me on to identify the direction of my dream. I am exposed to the academic ethical researching which I want in my academic and profession growth in life [MAK14 – Cameroonian].*

*...I am growing as a professional because I am in contact with more researchers, professors, even some families. I participate in different meetings and seminars, I know much more about my profession, for example, some three months back I was part of an investigation here in Uganda ... I know how to do system investigation and gave daily and weekly reports in a prescribed format. As a professional I am improving on my research skills [MAK15 – Somali]*

It may can be adduced from the quotations above that, through engaging in research, the international students were able to identify their professional focus which may have been unclear before they had enrolled at MAK. Similarly, it is argued that the remarkable innovations attested to by the international students in the survey data are a reflection of the operationalisation of the MAK Strategic Plan (2008/2009–2018/2019) which set a clear research agenda formulated in 2009 and reviewed for the period 2013–2018 (MAK Strategic Plan Review Report 2017). The development of a Research and Innovation Policy in 2009 with the requirement that staff member spend 20% of their time in research and dissemination; and all PhD students publish at least one



article before graduation may explain the high research output at MAK. To illustrate its commitment, the MAK Strategic Plan Review Report (2017) highlights the major area of collaborative research and innovation with national and international partners involving a signed Memorandum of Understanding for a period of three to five years but with some engagements lasting for 10 years in collaboration. The outstanding innovation was the Kiira EV, the electric car, produced as a vehicle design project in the Department of Engineering by students and staff and launched by His Excellency the President in November 2011 (Ministry of Education and Sports Policy Statement, 2012/2013). It may, therefore, be stated that the innovations that attracted the international students to choose MAK were a result of a deliberate and well-crafted plan with efforts involving a number of stakeholders, both internal and external, in its implementation. Given the level of collaboration and partnerships, coupled with the requirement that staff members and students conduct research and innovations in fulfilment of the Research and Innovation Policy (2009), it is argued that MAK is both a site for training researchers as well as a research site itself (MAK Visitation Committee Report, 2016)

#### **5.2.6. Offer of Financial Assistance**

The ability to carry the daily cost of their needs bears a huge influence on the international students' choice of a destination country (Azmat et al. 2015), as it does on the choice of a university at which to study (Yu, 2016). In the findings of this study, international students identified the offer of financial assistance or a scholarship as a consideration that had informed their choice of MAK. In the order of importance, as listed in Table.2, the offer of financial assistance ( $M = 2.14$ ,  $SD = 1.30$ ) was ranked as the sixth most important and influential factor in the choice of MAK. This finding is in line with the discussion in chapter four (4.6.2) on sponsorship conditionality that had influenced the choice of Uganda as a study destination. Of the 106 respondents who answered the question on their major source of funding 37 (35%) indicated funds from government and other sources. Based on the findings from the survey data collection, the organisations providing financial support were identified as Master Card Foundations Scholars' Programme, p4HPT, European Union, The Alliance for Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), European funded scholarship (INTRA ACP-CSAA Mobility scheme) DAAD, Ruforum, and Intra- ACP ARISE. In the survey data the international students indicated that the offer of scholarships was attached to the study at MAK university in Uganda. This was a common view and was validated in the

qualitative interviews during which the respondents alluded to the offer of financial assistance as important in their choice of MAK. For example, the respondents stated:

*... the basic reasons why I chose MAK is I got a scholarship to attend school here so that's how it was easy for me to choose MAK [MAK12 – Rwandese]*

*... I had a scholarship in Uganda ... and was required to migrate from my own country to another African country ... and secondly, the programme I decided to offer is only at MAK among Ugandan universities [MAK14 – Cameroonian].*

Implied in these quotations is that scholarship offers were made by other authorities and MAK was at the receiving end of the decisions made. Indeed, this study established that a number of organisations offer scholarships to international students but contingent upon enrolment in MAK. This result supports the finding of Roberts et al. (2010) Chinese students' choice of Taiwan and its universities at which to study was because of the scholarship offers from the Taiwanese government. Although the findings of a study conducted by Drewes and Michael (2006) found that a scholarship offer from a university was an appealing factor in respect of an international student's attraction to a universities, this study conducted in Uganda did not find that the sponsorship provided by MAK was a factor in their international students' decision-making. In fact, MAK does not offer scholarships to international students and, therefore, their choice of MAK cannot be attributed to its generosity in scholarship offers but is due to other considerations as the study has indicated.

### **5.2.7. Summary of Findings**

In relation to Makerere University, the factors that international students considered in their choice of MAK in order of importance and influence were I was interested in a specific education programme at MAK, better quality of higher education as compared to my home country, this was the best university to which I could gain admission, others (MAK is cheaper than other universities in Uganda, important people MAK has produced, current innovations taking place at MAK, opportunity for networking, love for MAK, political stability and safety and peace in Uganda), I was offered financial assistance, and geographical location in Uganda. The factors which were of very little importance in the international students' choice of MAK were my professor/teacher/counsellor advised me to study at MAK, opportunity for research with a professor at MAK and desire to study in Uganda.

### 5.3. Kampala International University Pull Factors

The findings presented and discussed in this chapter were in line with the research objective: *What are the pull factors that motivate international students to choose Uganda and the university they are attending?*. The findings are presented separately for the purposes of convenience and to facilitate the emergence of a coherent narrative specific to each university. Informed by the survey data that was collected and analysed, descriptive statistics were derived – See Table.3 below. The purpose of descriptive statistics is to show what is in the data. Basic inferential statistics, namely, standard deviation and variance, were derived during the data analysis to facilitate the development of meanings and conclusions from the data and the study.

**Table 5. 4: Descriptive statistics for international students’ pull factors in the choice of Kampala International University**

S/N	Factor	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q.5.1	This was the best university to which I was able to gain admission	2.58	1.01
Q.5.2	I was offered financial assistance	1.48	0.90
Q.5.3	Opportunity for research with a professor	1.90	1.07
Q.5.4	Classes in English	2.48	1.18
Q.5.5.	I just wanted to study in Uganda	1.88	1.01
Q.5.6	My professor/teacher/counsellor advised me to study at MAK	1.66	0.98
Q.5.7	I was interested in a specific educational programme	2.72	1.09
Q.5.8	Better quality of higher education as compared to my home country	2.55	1.12
Q.5.9	Geographical location in Uganda	2.56	1.07
Q.5.10	Others	2.24	1.26

Source: KIU Primary data

As indicated in Table: 5.3, KIU posted an average mean score of 2.18 among the factors listed and a standard deviation of 0.43. During the data analysis the analytic hierarchy process (AHP) approach (Dahari & Abduh, 2011) was used as well as the 80:20% rule that ranked factors according to level of importance and influence based on the international students’ opinions in respect of their choice of KIU – see Table 5.4 below.

**Table 5. 5: Categorisation of importance of pull factors in the choice of Kampala International University**

S/N	Factor	Mean	% Mean	Cum% Mean
Q.5.7	I was interested in a specific educational programme	2.72	12%	12%
Q.5.1	This was the best university to which I was able to gain admission	2.58	12%	24%

Q.5.9	Geographical location in Uganda	2.56	12%	36%
Q.5.8	Better quality of higher education as compared to my home country	2.55	12%	48%
Q.5.4	Classes in English	2.48	11%	59%
Q.5.10	Others.	2.24	10%	69%
Q.5.3	Opportunity for research with a professor	1.90	9%	76%
Q.5.5	I just wanted to study in Uganda	1.88	9%	85%
Q.5.6	My professor/teacher/counsellor advised me to study at KIU	1.66	8%	94%
Q.5.5	I was offered financial assistance	1.43	7%	100%

As indicated in Table.4 above and based on the mean scores for each factor, the findings indicate, in order of importance and influence, the factors that the international students considered in their choice of KIU, namely: I was interested in a specific programme, it was the best university at which I was able to gain admission, geographical location in Uganda, desire for better quality of education as compared to home country, classes in English, other factors [which are explained in detail in this report], opportunity of research with a professor, I just wanted to study in Uganda, professor/teacher/counsellor advised me to study at MAK and I was offered financial assistance. The factors that were identified as being of less significance in the choice of KIU in descending order were: I just wanted to study in Uganda, my professor/teacher/counsellor advised me to study at KIU and I was offered financial assistance.

On further analysis of the findings, it emerged that the desire to pursue a specific programme was the most important consideration on which the international students had based on in their choice of both MAK and KIU. It is plausible either that the courses that attracted them were not offered in their home countries or that the courses were offered at their home universities but may not have met the nationally set admission standards. It is postulated that, having failed to attain admission in the home country education system or having a genuine desire to study in Uganda, may have driven the international students to seek admission to a university outside of their home countries. Notwithstanding the standards of admission set as per the national education policies, universities tend to apply their own discretion in admitting students who may not meet the admission criteria or who have a limited chance of finding a place in a public university (Kruss, 2007, p. 140). This may explain why the KIU international students, after possibly having failed to gain admission in a public university in Uganda, had considered KIU as a private university with a relatively easy admission procedure (see section 4.5), for example, “It is the best university to which I was able

to gain admission”. This study established that international students with relatively weak grades gained admission to KIU although candidates had to undertake a six month upgrade programme known as access before admission. Given that better quality of education was ranked fourth in the choice of KIU as a private institution, it suggests that the KIU international students did not consider better quality of education as a critical factor in the choice process. It seems plausible to argue that, comparatively, as compared to their counterparts at KIU, international students who enrolled at MAK possessed better grades and were driven more by their desire to attain a better quality of education at a public university as was reflected in its second position in ranking of important and an influential pull factor. However, this does not mean that all KIU international students had weak grades on admission and neither does it suggest in any way that all international students admitted to MAK had good grades. This is in line with Odebro’s (2015) observation that Ugandan universities tend to lower their admission requirements to accommodate Kenyan students with C/D grades who are not able to gain admission in the Kenyan higher education system. A critical examination of the first four pull factors in Table 5.2 for MAK (I was interested in a specific study programme, desire for better quality of education, best university to which I was able to gain admission, and class is conducted in English) ; and Table 5.4. for KIU (I was interested in a specific study programme, best university to which I was able to gain admission, geographical location and better quality of higher education compared to my home country) it emerged out that the focus of the international students at MAK was academic in nature while the focus of their KIU counterparts is both academic and geographical with a desire for leisure.

Focusing on the geographical location, a non-academic factor as the third factor in the choice of KIU choice, I would argue that international students are attracted to KIU because of its location in a neighbourhood which offers diverse social and recreational facilities (beaches, hotels, bars, dance halls) easily accessible economic facilities (markets for local foodstuffs, banks, motorised transport means, shops and modern supermarkets), security surveillance (police stations, motorised and foot patrols), several universities that recruit international students and a high population of expatriate university staff members who reside in the neighbourhood. While these dimensions provide grounds for some level of security, a sense of belonging among people with a similar orientation (foreign in nature), this environment offers more social experiences which presupposes that international students at KIU are more inclined to place a higher value on leisure than on academic activities. I would argue that the ranking presumably differs between the MAK,

a public institution, and KIU, a private institution because of the different conceptual views people hold about their academic standards. I contend that a public institution is conceived of as meant to serve the public good under the state control and, therefore, it expected to deliver to the highest standard. This may explain the scramble for public university admission because it is considered to be privilege to apply for and be admitted to a government institution. Based on its privileged academic position and reputation, both national and international students consider MAK as their first choice when applying for university admission, other government universities as their second choice and the private universities as their third choice (Kwesiga & Ahikire, 2006). The private university is the third option because, in the main, it is considered to be a business established for personal gain and, therefore, quality may not be the key consideration.

In order to derive a deeper meaning from the statistically derived rankings extensive reference to the qualitative data was made in respect to each of the factors ranked. Each factor is discussed in the subsequent sections in order of importance and influence as indicated in Tables: 5.4 above.

### **5.3.1. Desire to Enrol in a Specific Education Programme**

As Table.4 indicated, the most important and influential factor in the international students' choice of KIU was their interest in enrolling for a specific education programme ( $M = 2.72$ ,  $SD = 1.09$ ). This implies that the international students felt it was very important for them to enrol for a course that would assist them to achieve their professional aspirations. The finding is consistent with earlier research by Afful-Broni & Noi-Okwei, (2010) who established that the availability of the desired programme and academic reputation were the most important factors which international undergraduate students considered in their choice of the University of Education, Winneba (U.E.W), in Ghana. Similar findings by scholars such as Wilkins and Huisman (2011) in a UK study, Ming (2010) in a Malaysian study and Dahari and Abduh (2011) in a Malaysian post graduate study confirm the availability of a desired course as an attraction when international students choose a university at which to study. The following statement validated the survey finding and highlighted the desire to enrol for a specific for a course with the respondent's being vividly expressed during an interview:

*...I started my degree at the International University of East Africa (IUEA), I did my art course programme there but the course that I wanted to do was civil engineering. I found out that I was not good at drawing so I changed to do industrial chemistry. IUEA does not*

*offer industrial chemistry so I decided to come and do it from here at KIU [KIU5 – DRC Congo] and*

*... since primary school I was yearning to be an advocate ... and I have been here for four years studying a degree in law [KIU12 – Kenyan].*

It would appear from the quotations above that the international students had set their sights on a specific career early in life. Chuang (2010) presents the view that a student's interest in a course of study is a reflection of his/her career intentions and is based on the anticipated rewards and fulfilment associated with the envisaged career. I submit that students with a clear cut desire for a career will not follow any course of study just for the sake of it but will search for where the course in which they are interested is offered in order to fulfil their academic and career ambitions. It is argued that this is an area on which universities should focus when developing courses and programmes and that they should consider that the courses designed must meet the future aspirations and expectations of international students' capacity to compete favourably in the labour market. On the other hand, in the different context of domestic higher education, Sá et al. (2012) reported that availability of a wide range of courses was not an influential factor that prospective Dutch students considered in their choice of a university at which to study domestically. Again this difference in finding is not an issue of concern given the difference in context, aspirations, expectations and a stream of other characteristics that influence the choice of university.

### **5.3.2. Best University to which I was able to gain Admission**

In view of the fact that international students take up study abroad in the expectation of attaining recognised academic credentials, it is, therefore, to be expected that they enrol at institutions that will help them to achieve this. As indicated in table.4, derived from a quantitative analysis, the results indicate that these KIU international students' belief that KIU was the best university at which they could enrol ( $M = 2.58, SD = 1.01$ ) was the second most important and influential factor in their decision to enrol at KIU. While it may be difficult to reach consensus on the concept "best university", it would, nevertheless, seem to imply a combination of dimensions that include, among others, the level of research engagement, participation and involvement in globalisation and internationalisation dynamics, the extent of collaboration and partnership with industry and the social prestige attributed to the institution with all these factors pointing to the reputation of the university. In relation to the role of the institution's reputation in the choice of such institution, the respondents made the following comments:

*My reason for choosing KIU was for its value and mission and, moreover, the name considered an international uUniversity ... so I was, like, KIU may be the best choice [KIU9 – Rwandese].*

*I chose KIU because I had heard a lot about it, 10 years back I started hearing about it, so I searched, heard about their courses, saw some of their graduate students, got some comments from some people, especially on Twitter and social networks and that is when I realised that the university is good [KIU8 – Nigerian].*

*... the reason for choosing KIU is because it is a chartered university [KIU10 – Somali].*

*... it's among the best universities in Uganda and it's ranked as the first (1<sup>st</sup>) private university in Uganda [KIU3-Nigerian]... with a better learning environment” [KIU4 – Nigerian].*

These findings lend support to the results of a study conducted by Afful-Broni & Noi-Okwei (2010) who established that academic reputation was the most important factor which undergraduate students considered in their choice of the University of Education, Winneba (UEW) in Ghana. Likewise, Wilkins and Huisman (2011) are of the opinion that students choose universities with a high ranking and quality courses because the academic outputs of such universities are globally recognised. Similarly, Kusumawati (2013) asserts that, in the choice of a university, it is important to be take into account its accreditation status, public image and the possibility of finding good jobs after graduation. Informed by the study finding and the literature, it is argued that the image and choice of a university at which to study at is founded on its academic achievements, the legal mandate based on its accreditation status and word of mouth that expresses public feeling about the university, among others. In light of the discussion above and bearing in mind Marginson's (2011) concept of “glonacal” as the local, national and global dimensions that are implemented at various levels, minor actions of an academic nature but of a quality standard undertaken at the university level combined for all universities result in the national education system receiving international recognition and referrals. Similarly, actions and decisions made at the global level and channelled through treaties and conventions that are ratified at the national level are operationalised through the enactment of national laws and policies which are implemented by the individual higher education institutions.



### 5.3.3. Geographical Location in Uganda

The geographical location of a country is often taken into account in the study abroad decision-making process embarked upon by parents and students. As Table 4 indicated, the geographical location of the university in Uganda ( $M = 2.56$ ,  $SD = 1.07$ ) emerged as the third most important and influential factor which played a role in the international students' choice of KIU. Kampala International University is situated the Gabba road in the Kansanga suburb which is approximately 7 kilometres [4.3 miles] from the central business district of Kampala, the capital city and largest town in Uganda. Its locus is  $0^{\circ}17'41.0''N$ ,  $32^{\circ}36'13.0''E$  (Latitude: 0.294722; Longitude: 32.603611). The importance of proximity to the capital city is in line with Marshall's (2018, p. 8) assertion that the physical site of the university plays a significant role in international students' choice of a university with higher enrollment noted in the major urban cities and fewer in the smaller towns outside of the major city. Similarly, Abubakar, Shanka, and Muuka (2010) aver that the ease with which the student is able access an institution of interest is a critical factor that influence the choice of a higher education institution as does the availability of support services both in and outside of the university, thus creating a holistic environment that enhances a positive living experience. On the matter of access, a respondent stated:

*...I can take a commuter taxi or a bodaboda [licensed motorcycle transporter] to Kampala city for a fee of 2,000 Ugandan shillings [KIU7 – Nigerian].*

This extract speaks to the convenient transport which is available and at an affordable cost. Odebero (2015) indicated that the country's geographical proximity and ease of road transport make HEIs in Uganda an attractive choice for international students from the EAC states. I hold the view that the image of the immediate town in which the university is located influences students' choice because it portrays the surrounding in which the student will live and study. It is argued that when students perceive the image of the city or town as appropriate to their needs then this increase the probability of their choosing to study at a university in the city/town. The importance of a university's location in students' choices was further illustrated in a research study that established that, despite the known challenges and restrictions occasioned by the Italian legal, policy and institutional frameworks, international students often choose to study at Sapienza University in Rome (Staniscia, 2012). I contend that, however difficult and challenging a country's legal and regulatory frameworks may be, there will always be student mobility into that country driven by their desire to fulfil their academic aspirations and expectations if the country is an

attractive study destination. It is, thus, clear that, although the existing law may present stumbling blocks, it will not curtail total student mobility if the country/HEI meets the requirements of international students.

The finding that KIU's location in Uganda attracted international students to KIU is in alignment with the views of Winter and Whiteside (2017) and Rutter, Lettice, and Nadeau, (2016) that a university is identified by where it is physically situated and that this offers an opportunity for the university to be different from its competitors, moreso when it offers similar academic programmes to those offered by its competitors. Rutter et al. (2016) further contend that, in discussing the location of a university, focus should go beyond the known physical boundary of the university to incorporate the strategic institutional organisations and activities that surrounds the university so as to depict its ambience and ensure a holistic understanding of the university by its stakeholders. Moreover, the location of the university will serve as a factor attracting international students only if their needs such as affordable accommodation, satisfactory transport facilities as well as the availability of a variety of food supplies, shopping and medical facilities, recreational facilities, place of worship and good security, among others (Shaw & Fincher, 2010).

#### **5.3.4. Desire for better Quality of Education**

In order of importance, the analysis of the survey findings (Table.4) indicated the international students' desire to achieve a better quality of higher education as compared to that offered in the home country ( $M = 2.25$ ,  $SD = 1.12$ ) as the fourth most important and influential factor in their choice of KIU as a study institution. This finding agrees with earlier research by Wilkins and Huisman (2011), Padlee et al. (2010) and Bodycott (2009) that the perception of the quality of the education offered by the university influences international students' choice of a study institutions abroad with their choices being informed by the desire to attain the appropriate academic credentials and competencies that would improve their social status and economic capacity. In support of the survey findings, during the interviews extensive and repeated reference was made to the quality of education as a factor in choosing MAK. This is illustrated in the responses below:

*Actually, I can say that it's satisfying my expectation. As a Law student I wanted to get what I am learning today and apply it in the field. I am seeing that it is actually what is required in the field as I have been exposed to court. I have been seeing what lawyers litigate about outside there and what we learn here at school is the same so I think I have gotten the best [KIU12 – Kenyan].*

This study clearly demonstrated the international students' desire to attain quality education to enable them to achieve their academic and professional goals in a specific discipline. It is argued that the fact that the international students had chosen to study at KIU indicates that they had conceptualised it as an institution with the capacity to enable them to attain their career and professional goals. In this regard, the ability to gain relevant technical competence and also to apply the skills acquired to overcome challenges in the community but also achieve personal professional development is an output which attributable to a quality education system. I further opine that quality education implies being confident and at ease while engaging with the technical demands of a discipline as well the ability both to refer to the past as you engage with the present challenges and also recognize the emerging trends in the discipline. In line with the preceding discussion, Skolnik (2016) opines that quality education systems produce professionals with the capacity to mentor upcoming specialists in various disciplines. The satisfaction and elation implied expressed in the quotation above seem to indicate that the student had acquired the requisite theoretical and practical skills and would readily apply them to the challenges encountered in the field of work. It is may be concluded that the students aspire to a quality education for strategic reasons and also remain relevant in the prevailing and future academic and professional disciplines that are rapidly changing in the face of the forces of globalisation and internationalisation.

Furthermore, at a national level, the provision of quality education is critical in ensuring that the strategic human resource needs in respect of the realisation of the national development plans are met and, at the global level, that goods and services are produced that enhance national competitiveness in the world market. It is argued that an education system that provides quality education is the only enabler in the achievement of individual students' academic and professional aspirations as well as national and international competitive goals. While universities may lay claim to offering quality education, a deeper analysis of three dimensions, namely, curriculum taught, nature of students and standard of the academics engaged in the teaching, would either validate or dispel the claims of academic value provided to the students. In respect of the curriculum taught, the focus would be on the extent to which the curriculum is relevant to the needs of both public and private sector employers and its practical ability to enabling a graduate to be self-employed.

Further inquiry into the quality of education offered would focus on the suitability and capacity of the students in respect of their ability to engage in research processes, academic writing, critical thinking and constructive academic and abstract debate linking past, current and future perspectives in order to demonstrate their mastery of the discipline in question. Similarly, an inquiry into the lecturers' competence and teaching ability versus student expectations would provide an indication of the extent to which the claims of quality of education were valid. An investigation into lecturer competence should involve feedback from all stakeholders, in particular, students, despite the fact that studies have indicated students are sometimes biased in their assessment of lecturers (Yoav & Adiv 2014) in the hope of positively influencing the future assessment of and improvement in their scores (Nath & Lovaglia, 2009). It is argued that, to obtain a scientific validation of the quality of education offered, a critical review of the following dimensions, namely, curriculum taught, nature of students/ learners and lecturers' capacity, could be conducted as the most effective means of confirming claims by students, higher education institutions and national government as compared to globally accepted standards.

#### **5.3.5. Classes conducted in English**

As table.5.4 illustrates, English as the medium of instruction ( $M = 2.48$ ,  $SD = 1.18$ ) was ranked as the fifth most important and influential factor in the choice of KIU while, in the case of MAK, it was ranked as the fourth most important and influential factor. This suggests that becoming proficient in English was an important aspiration of the international students when they were applying for admission to KIU. It is argued that the desire to acquire academic writing skills and communicative competence is a driving factor that impels students from non-English speaking countries to migrate to English speaking countries and to enrol in their education systems as a way in which to improve their English language competencies. Speaking to this desire and validating the survey findings in respect of classes conducted in English as an attractive factor, in the interviews the international students declared that:

*... for us, we learn in the Somali language from primary 1-8 and, in some schools, they teach in Arabic. So, we study English for only four years but the lecturer will come, teach and translate in Somali ... here, the lecturer will speak and explain in English ... for me it was very hard to catch up, so I read a lot. I struggled to understand what the lecturer was saying and how he communicated, even the accent, how he speaks because the lecturers are different .Some of them, you cannot understand them ... if you want to understand him I have to discuss with the lecturer or with the rest of the students [KIU13 – Somali].*

*Rwanda is a French speaking country and Uganda is an English-speaking country so I wanted to be fluent in the English language ... where I come from people are not that fluent in English and our country ... there is a plan to shift from French to English, so I wanted to improve my English, become fluent and apply it easily at work and in my social life [KIU9 – Rwandese].*

These quotations provide evidence of the international students' intense desire to learn English. These findings agree with the research of Roberts et al. (2009) which established that Chinese international students in Taiwan considered learning a Mandarin language as the most attractive aspect of of Taiwan University, given its use in their education system. It appeared that the fact that classes at MAK are conducted in English was perceived by the international students as an opportunity to improve their competency in English. On the other hand, as also demonstrated in the quotation above, Park, Klieve, Tsurutani, and Harte (2017) observed that international students experience challenges related to understanding their lecturers' accents which affected their ability to communicate during their academic engagements. In recognition of the fact that national education systems differ across the world it is to be expected that international students would have been exposed to a different language of instruction and a different learning system and, thus, that adapting to a new English speaking academic system in a new environment in a relatively short time would be bound to be challenging (Nguyen, 2011). However, it is argued that the challenges in relation to accents notwithstanding, learning English as the language used in academic instruction would be of significant benefit to international students, particularly those who may not have been proficient in English before enrolling.

### **5.3.6. Other Factors – Opportunities to make Friendship across the Globe**

In the survey data analysis and as indicated in table.4 the category “Others” (Mean = 2.24, SD = 1.26) emerged as the sixth most important and influential factor with one dimension therefore being identified as the opportunity to make friends across the globe. International education is a powerful mechanism through which it enables students to develop and nurture networks that could be used for future instrumental capital. Through both formal and non-formal curricula operating as a network structure for university activities, opportunities for deeper interaction, engagement and acquaintance with operating systems are opened up for both national and international students (Leask, 2009). To this end, Geddie (2013) maintains that the level of social ties and individual interest influence the choices made, the level of attainment of academic and career directions and the extent to which the individual achieves a healthy integration into a system or

society. It is argued that building cross-border relationships within a diverse academic environment requires an opening up to other students as well as the personal initiative and effort which prepare students for academic and professional advancement in the future. An international student studying engineering highlighted the nurturing of professional networks as follows:

*... through the position I have had as the Chairperson of the KIU Engineering Students' Association, with the help of the institution [KIU], I have been able to move around to get to know companies, I did all my industrial training here in Uganda at Roofings and at Eskom Uganda Limited[KIU14 – DRC Congo].*

This quotation suggests that a strong network was formed, nurtured and developed into the academic and professional mentorship that characterises internationalisation strategy of collaborations and partnership in service delivery. While professional networks are important for the future, international students also engage in social networks during their study abroad. Along similar lines, Hendrickson, Rosen and Aune (2010) opine that ability to form and maintain healthy relationship with other people is an important factor in achieving happiness and emotional satisfaction within the environment in which one lives and achieves academic goals (Azmat et al. 2015). One of the respondents made the following comment in respect of social networks:

*I have been with Sudanese people and their culture ... I understand how Kenyans and Tanzanians live and I even speak a little bit of their Swahili. So, I am learning a lot of things from these people: their food, culture, how they live back home. Even Burundians, ya, I have learnt a lot actually from people from Burundi, Congo, Sudan and Nigeria. It has helped me to understand because if I were to go to Nigeria, even right, now I would find it easy, at least, because somebody will help you there [KIU13 – Zambian].*

The level of interaction between international students from the same country, national students and other international students may vary in strength (Hendrickson et al. 2010) but, nevertheless, where such networks exist; they offer important instrumental and financial support. In fact, it may be said the amount of time, interest, and energy international students invest in nurturing relationships may determine how successfully they meet the intricate academic requirements they face (Rienties et al., 2013). Furthermore, they indicated that international students tend to develop networks with other students with whom they share a academic major. I contend that a socially connected environment is a support function in respect of which it is not possible to quantify the value but that it constitutes a strong foundation for the students' successful integration into the community as well as assisting them to achieve their academic goals. It is important to note that

nurturing and developing their networks on campus require personal effort, interest and initiative on the part of international students but also that they play an important role in the international students' involvement and participation in university life. It is in light of this that Leask (2009) disowns the common belief that it is the student's responsibility to nurture and develop networks as the university watches. Yet through formal curriculum with designed activities embedded there is the seed through which networks germinate, are nurtured and developed.

### **5.3.7. Opportunity to conduct Research with Professor**

The analysis of the in their survey responses (Table.4) of the international students indicated that the opportunity to carry out research with a professor ( $M = 1.90$ ,  $SD = 1.07$ ) was the seventh most important and influential factor that had guided their choice of KIU although on a decreasing scale. This would seem to imply that fewer of international students were influenced by the opportunity to conduct research with a professor as an attraction to KIU compared to their counterparts at MAK. In the case of MAK, this same pull factor was ranked as the ninth ( $M=1.95$ ,  $SD=1.11$ ) most important and influential factor – somewhat surprising in light of the research outputs being published at the time of the study. Based on the rankings of this factor in respect of the choice of the universities, it would appear that the international students prefer KIU ton MAK in respect of the opportunity to conduct research with a professor as a pull factor. In a research community engagement arrangement, it is expected that knowledge production is co-authored and that a mentorship programme that involves students in the learning process is planned and implemented. However, this study established that there was minimal research work that involved professors and students at KIU. In relaying his academic experience one respondent stated

*Basing on my expectation of KIU, I realised that KIU lacks the desire and motivation for research and practical things ... even although, in the last two semesters, it has been doing things well, but still there is little motivation/push ... There is not much research at KIU compared to Makerere University so, in terms of research, Makerere is far better so they have to look at that point of research here at KIU [KIU14 – DRC Congo].*

In light of this finding and the citation, it appears that students understand the importance of research and that they would like to participate in both academic and applied research. However, there are limited opportunities to do this. The finding suggests that there are relatively low research outputs by academics at KIU. Given that academic ranking and reputation tend to be based on publications in peer reviewed and internationally recognised journals with a high scientific citation

index, among other considerations, this apparent research weakness will prevent KIU from taking its place among universities in Africa which are characterised by intensive research. Leask (2009, p. 200) maintains that a well-designed, formal academic curriculum results in the interaction and involvement of international students in both academic and community projects in which universities engage, first as a mentoring strategy for learning purpose but also to link the university with the community. In fact, Yu (2016) argues that, if a university is to grow into a “university of excellence”, this depends on the reputation of its academic staff and, more specifically, the research output of the professors. Equally, Yu (2016) maintains that, as a strategy, there is need to remodel and rebrand the professors if the existing universities are to become unique, build reputations and outperform their peers in the higher education space. In support of the preceding assertion, I would argued that a university is recognised based on a number of dimensions, including the number and quality of the academic staff members it employs, the extent to which the new knowledge created solves existing community problems and its ability to anticipate future challenges and provide mitigation measures through research work.

#### **5.2.8. Diverse Community of Students**

While this factor was not mentioned in the survey finding, in the analysis of the interview data his theme emerged as an important and influential factor in the choice of KIU. It was mentioned repeatedly during the interviews that studying in a diverse student environment facilitated intercultural appreciation and understanding, learning in the globalised environment of KIU enhanced their diversity management skills and prepared them to work in a diverse global employment market. The following quotations bore testimony to this:

*My friends said there is an international university and you can meet so many people who come from so many different countries. That's how and why I applied to KIU [Res, No.11: KIU – Somali].*

*... so, with time, a friend told me about KIU, that it's where there are many foreigners and I said “Fine let me try” ... then I came, applied and, after some days, I was granted admission [Res, No.14: KIU – DRC].*

Aligned to this finding is the view of Yamauchi, Taira, and Trevorror (2016, p. 464) that the current higher education learning environment is characterised by international students from different cultures and speaking different languages. While there are benefits associated with diversity in the university context, for example, more income and greater opportunities for



networking, among others, such diversity also presents practical challenges to both the academic and support staff in relation to designing and applying initiatives that are capable of responding effectively to the needs of the diverse community in which they work. As a relatively new phenomenon, multiculturalism capacity is a gradual process that must be nurtured and developed among university staff in order to ensure the creation of an affective connection with the students in the course of their study abroad. The literature indicates that many of the concerns raised in by international students in respect of their university experience relate to issues of discrimination and marginalisation based on nationality and limited involvement. Nevertheless, Yamauchi et al. (2016) established that lecturers who make motivating statements and exhibit encouraging body language are perceived to be demonstrating an interest in meeting to meeting the students' immediate needs, thus nurturing a healthy faculty-student relationship. It is suggested that, rather than waiting for international students to enrol for the courses on offer, the university administrators should take it upon themselves to design appropriate systems and policies that reflect a pleasant environment for international students. The formulation of a strategic plan which reflects the university's vision and mission on paper but which is not reflected in practice will do nothing to attract and retain international students. It may be argued that it is important that all the small but important actions that touch the daily lives of the diverse international student community are practised at all levels of the university management structure. In this way international students will feel cared for and they will be satisfied with the quality of the service offered and, thus, in all likelihood they will recommending that others enrol at the university in question. Michalski, Cunningham, and Henry (2017) contend that it is the responsibility of the university to offer the services that are necessary for international students' integration into a new environment, be it academic or social in nature. In line with the preceding argument, I concur and opine that admitting and registering a student is a social and moral contract that bewtows responsibility between the two parties. Being in a foreign land, the university has more to do for the student to settles before beginning academic engagements.

### **5.3. Summary of KIU Findings**

The study established, in order of importance and influence, the following factors which the international students had taken into account in their choice of Kampala International University, namely, I was interested in a specific programme, this was the best university to which I was able to gain admission, its geographical location in Uganda, better quality of higher education as

compared to that my home country, classes conducted in English, other factors and the opportunity to conduct research with a professor. According to the findings, the non-important factors that had contributed to their choice of KIU included I just wanted to study in Uganda, my professor/teacher/counsellor advised me to study at KIU, I was offered financial assistance and the diverse community of students.

#### **5.4. Summary of Pull Factors in the Choice of MAK and KIU**

The evidence provided by the findings of the study indicated that choice of MAK or KIU by the majority of the international students had been informed by their desire to attain a quality education in order to realise their academic and professional aspirations. Although the factors that they had considered in their choices differed in ranking, overall, they were similar in all respects. The most striking similarity in ranking related to “I was interested in a specific study programme” which was ranked top for both institutions. It is important to note was no specific factor other than the preceding factor that may be said to have influenced the international students in their choice of MAK or KIU but that a combination of other factors that had operated independently within their domain had influenced the choices that were made. It was further concluded that advice from professors/teachers/counsellors, opportunity for research with a professor and the desire to study in Uganda did not play a significant role in the choice of either MAK or KIU. The existence of powerful alumni, current innovations and the affordability of the university tuition in comparative terms with other universities in Uganda had influence the choice of MAK as a preferred study institution. It is worth noting that the offer of scholarships was found to be significant in the choice of MAK, a public institution, but insignificant in the choice of KIU, a private institution. It may, therefore, be concluded that the financial benefits of scholarship offers did not influence the choice of a private university as compared to the choice of a public university as a result of the conditions attached to such scholarships. On the other hand, it is posited that availability of a diverse international student community at KIU influenced its choice as a study institution.



## Chapter Six

### International Students' Lived Academic Experiences in Uganda and Home Country

#### 6.1. Introduction

International students embarking on an international education take with them the earlier experiences they have acquired through interacting with the education system as determined by the education policy and system in their home countries. It is to be expected that, as the student enrolls for another education system, together with the process of engagement with the systems, curriculum and people, new experiences are undergone. In light of this, Go8, cited in Ong and Ramia (2009), conceptualised the student's experience as encompassing two main features, namely: the capacity of the student to attain the appropriate characteristics expected of a degree holder and the supply of high quality education by higher education institutions. This would seem to imply that the academic experience requires individual absorption and/or immersion into the daily activities which happen in an educational institution while it is through interaction that the behaviours, values, and competencies are acquired, thus constituting the experience gained from such engagement. This chapter presents and discusses the findings with respect to the third specific objective of the study: *What are the lived experiences of international students in Ugandan universities*. In an attempt to realise this objective, a survey instrument was administered and the data analysed.

Table 6.1 below identifies four dimensions of the students' experience, namely, academic life (classes), social life (friends), personal life (feelings) and accommodation (housing and transport). Qualitative data was collected from the one on one, personal interviews which were conducted. This data was then analysed with themes emerging from this analysis. For the purposes of convenience, the findings are presented separately in two chapters – the academic experiences are presented in an independent, Chapter six, while the dimensions of social life, personal life and accommodation are combined as socioeconomic experiences in another chapter, Chapter seven. The intention behind this separation was to make clear the voices of the diverse international students in describing their academic and socio-economic experiences within the context of the institutions at which they had enrolled (Heng, 2017). The findings are presented in an integrative design to augment the findings from one data source so as to achieve a coherent and deep

understanding of the dimensions that informed the students’ experiences in Table 6.1 for MAK and Table 6.2 for KIU below, ass derived from the analysis of the survey data

**Table 6. 1: Makerere University international students’ categorisation of lived experiences**

Makerere University				
Dimension	Mean	Std. Deviation	% mean	Cum % mean
Academic life (Class)	2.38	0.83	30	30
Accommodation (Housing/transport)	2.15	1.07	27	57
Personal life (Feelings)	1.80	0.76	23	80
Social life (Friendship)	1.63	0.78	20	100

**Source:** MAK analysed data 2017-2018.

**Table 6. 2: Kampala International University international students’ categorisation of lived experiences**

Kampala International University				
Dimension	Mean	Std. Deviation	% Mean	Cum % mean
Accommodation (Housing/transport)	2.52	1.11	31	31
Academic life (Class)	2.16	0.85	26	57
Personal life Feelings)	1.83	0.89	22	79
Social life (Friendship)	1.70	0.84	21	100

**Source:** KIU analysed data 2017-2018.

It may be observed that, in relation to life experiences, MAK posted an average mean score of 1.99 while KIU posted an average of 2.05 average reflected “no difficulty” and “little difficulty” with life experiences respectively on the Likert scale. It would appear that KIU international students lived a relatively simple life and, thus, that their life experiences were more casual and better as compared to those of their counterparts at MAK. A high and positive correlation of 0.77 was established that indicated dimensions that had a similar impact on international students’ evaluation of their life difficulties in both institutions. The analytic hierarchy process (AHP) approach (Dahari & Abduh, 2011, p. 10616) was conducted and the 80:20% rule used to establish the MAK international students’ lived experiences ranked according to level of importance and influence. The rankings were as follows: first, academic life (class), followed by accommodation (housing and transport), personal life (feelings) and social life (friendship). This finding implied

that, for the international students at MAK, academic life took priority over the other life experiences. The fact that social life received the lowest ranking could be explained by the limited nature of the social amenities available on or near the university campus, for example, beaches, hotels, dancing halls.

On the other hand, the findings on life experiences at KIU, in order of importance, were ranked as accommodation (housing and transport), academic life (class) and personal life (feelings). It may be argued that the international students' life experiences in respect of accommodation was informed by the desire for their personal security to be guaranteed as explained by the anxiety international students experience in locating secure and affordable residence. Similarly, the busy social environment in which KIU is located creates a high demand for accommodation, thus leading to the high cost of accommodation. Nevertheless, there is a university hall of residence with limited capacity to accommodate all students. Despite social life being ranked the lowest at KIU, there is a variety of social amenities in the university neighbourhood, for example, night clubs, dance halls, sports amenities, high profile residences, high-class hotels, a very busy business environment, a number of universities in the locality with a high number of international students and a highly populated community.

Informed by the findings on the lived experiences under the four dimensions (Tables 1 and 2 above), this chapter focused on the academic experiences of the international students. The findings in relation to the academic experiences are presented and discussed with the focus on application for admission, classroom and learning style, student-faculty relationship, academic demand and/or load, personal and professional impact of studying in Uganda, approaches to improve service delivery to international students, plans to encourage prospective students to study at Ugandan universities, strategies to attract international students to enrol and changes to ensure that the universities adapt in order to remain competitive in the international higher education context.

## **6.2. Academic Experience**

International students come from various academic backgrounds with varying linguistic abilities and competencies in class, values, and scholarly traditions – all informed by their previous education systems. When students migrate to another education system and must cope with its requirements, they are expected to become immersed and absorbed into learning how the system

operates, adapt to it and apply it in the course of their study abroad. However, Doyle, Manathunga, Prinsen, Tallon, and Cornforth (2018) argue that changing from one long-held academic tradition to another system considered alien by the international students may be challenging, despite the fact that the hybrid nature of their experience and new academic environment is of immense value to them. It is important to note that the academic experience is unique to each student. This emerged in the qualitative interviews but not in the survey data. This further supports the importance of a mixed method study in which the findings from one method either support the findings from the other approach; or where the findings from one method are silent, something that would not have been discovered if the study had been purely quantitative or qualitative. The application of the mixed method for a study involving international students was deemed appropriate to gain a deeper understanding of the academic and/or pedagogical issues involved, their lived challenges imposed by interacting with a new environment. Of deeper interest is the discovery of experiences that emerge from such engagement with actors in the new academic and social environment.

I argue that a pleasant academic experience depends on the way in which the partnership arrangement between the international students and the university as the principal actor has been implemented. Where the university sees the international students as cash cows and invests little in their integration into the new environment and without a sense of comfort and enjoyment in respect of the learning processes, international students are bound to report negative experiences and will not want to advise other students to enrol at the institution in question (Heng, 2018). In essence, ensuring that the international students enjoy a positive academic experience requires the university to attend to the international students' immediate needs in fulfilment of its moral, ethical and legal obligation in the service of their educational goals. It is impossible to discuss academic experience without recognising the centrality of the university as it designs the courses and curricula, invites applications from and admits students, conducts the teaching and learning sessions, engages in assessment with the application of diverse strategies and organises internship and placement programmes, among others, which form the academic experiences of the international students during their international education journey.

### **6.2.1. Application for Admission**

In relation to the application for admission, the study investigated the sources of information on which, among others, international students use to make choice of which university to apply to and

seek admission. Avery and Levin (2010) observed that, worldwide, admission to first class national universities has gained the reputation of stiff competition occasioned by the massification of higher education. In order to compete international students, in their search for the best university at which to enrol, conduct an information search by diverse means to guide their decisions. Other than establishing the sources of information which the international students consulted in their choice of university and the letter on the application for admission, the survey did not investigate the individual academic experiences of the respondents. However, the silence in the quantitative results was resolved in the qualitative section of the study. The foundation for all academic experiences, as discussed in the next subsections, is rooted in the application for and admission into a university. In order to gain a deeper understanding of the international students' application and admission to MAK and KIU, personal, one to one, in-depth interviews were conducted with similarities and divergences in their application and admission experiences emerging from the interview data. In fact, a diversity of personal experiences was uncovered, for example, not understanding the process and course involved in applying to [MAK2 – Kenyan, KIU9 – Rwandese, KIU5 – DRC Congolese], application on line [MAK14 – Cameroonian, KIU8 – Nigerian], coming in person to Uganda to fill in the forms and then returning to the home country [MAK3 – Burundian, MAK7 – Kenyan, MAK9 – Tanzanian]; and applying in person at the KIU branch offices in other countries [KIU2 – Kenyan, KIU12 – Kenyan and KIU14 – Zambian]. Common patterns in the application and admission process were established in respect of obtaining assistance with the application process from a former student with a respondent declaring that “*a Kenyan lecturer, who was also a former student here [MAK], assisted us with the application processes so the application and getting the admissions were not a big deal*” [MAK1 – Kenyan, MAK5 – Kenyan], while another respondent stated that: “*It was very easy for me to apply because, at that time, one of the children of a colleague of my father was studying law here so we just sent our credentials to him and he applied directly to the university*” [KIU4 – Nigerian]. However, while it had been easy for some of the respondents to apply and gain admission, for some the experience had been fraught with daunting challenges as expressed in the extensive extract below:

*At first, it was, I didn't know how to apply. For me, I had come with my documents in French from Burundi. I had managed to certify them in English but they told me it can't work here because the documents were in the Burundi system that is in percentages and the Ugandan system is in grades. I had to certify them from MAK and it was equated into the Ugandan system by the Uganda National Examination Board. After certification, it was*



*not easy. Because I was two weeks late in applying, I was told go back to Burundi ... because the deadline had passed. But, in the admission office, I found someone, a lady who knew a little of our language and it was very easy as she was friendly to me. When I went to pay the fees in Crane bank they refused my money because the deadline had passed. I went back to the office, the woman told me “It’s okay, let me give you a small note, go to Satanic Bank, they will accept your money”, so I went there and they accepted my money [MAK3 – Burundian].*

Based on the findings from the revelations during the interviews, I observed that the international students’ academic experiences had differed – from admission, engagement with learning activities to eventual graduation – and had demanded of them self-discovery in an unfamiliar education system. This finding agrees with Lee and Rice (2007) who established differences between the experiences of international White students and those considered to be of colour, thus raising concerns about racial discrimination. It is argued that a positive and supportive environment results in positive academic experiences for international students while little concern on the part of the university management or limited support results in feelings of disappointment and frustration if the international students’ expectations are not met. The academic experiences are informed by the the teaching and learning style applied by the university compared to that in the home country. The discussion on teaching and learning style applied in the two universities is discussed in the next section.

### **6.2.2. Class Teaching and Learning Style**

The Ugandan University and Other Tertiary Institutions Act (2001), as amended (2006, 2008), mandates universities to design courses, advertise for student applications and admission and conduct classroom teaching aimed at the awarding of certificates, diplomas, and degrees, conducting research and publishing. When the courses designed are seen as meeting the academic and professional aspirations and expectations of the students, students from around the world apply to the university in question and, on admission, enter the classroom environment with varied and distilled academic experiences. It is accepted that teaching and learning styles are unique and specific to the academic traditions and cultures which are informed by the national policy. The study established that the teaching and learning approach applied in MAK and KIU was experienced by the international students as new and different from the home country classroom and learning styles. Speaking to the findings, a student shared that: “... *and the main difference is that group discussions are quite essential here in Uganda, like MAK, but they are essential for*

*they lead to academic success” [MAK12 – Rwandese]. Seemingly shocked by the language of instruction used in class, a respondent stated: “Actually, when I got here thing were very different because there [in Southern Sudan], when you go to your class, they teach in English and other languages, like Arabic, and you spend less time at schools, not actually like here” [MAK10 – South Sudanese].*

Similar concerns about more than one language of instruction were vividly expressed as follows: “... in Cameroon, because of the use of a mixture of English and French, I had a problem because of the language barrier. A lecturer would come to class and speak French, yet I am not fluent in French, and continue to teach more in French which meant that I would not acquire more knowledge...When I came here, because I am an English speaker, I can share with the lecturers...the lecturers are good, they direct and show us what to do in terms of our future and the teaching system is good... the class is well organised, they come to lecture with their Power Point, they explain and give us assignments, we submit the assignments, after that we have exams at the end of the semester and write the exams” [MAK14 – Cameroonian]. A more detailed account of class teaching and learning was described in an interview as follows:

*...lecturers come to lecture, they involve us in discussions, and they ask questions, they introduce a topic, some briefly. Sometimes, before the next topic comes up, they tell us research on the topic. When they come for another lecture they ask for feedback on the topic we researched, you give your view so there is participation and, if you are wrong, the lecturer corrects you as they give some briefing on the topic. Again they give us some coursework ...which you go and do, maybe for a week or two weeks. Sometimes you come and you are divided up in groups of 10 to 12 students to research a certain topic or question and come up with findings, you give it to him, he goes through it and sometimes he can call you to go and make corrections, where necessary, but that is after marking it. That is mostly done when dealing with writing a proposal or some research work – after marking they call you to get feedback [MAK1-Kenyan].*

This extract illuminated on the teaching and learning activities to which the students were exposed, include working in groups and, hence, learning group dynamics, co-learning through shared responsibility in doing group or research work, academic writing and presentation skills and the importance of feedback as a point of reflection in the learning process. Heng (2017) posits that it is not possible for all international students to have similar experiences; likewise, Hu, Gregory, and Pei-Ching (2010) contend that their learning styles, too, cannot be the same given their different academic settings. This study established that some of the international students

considered that the teaching and learning styles at MAK and KIU were not satisfactory as they were more teacher-centred than had been expected. This is exemplified in the following quotation in which several reservations are expressed:

*Teaching at MAK, I cannot complain but I found it to be teacher-centred. I expected it to be more student-centred given that it is a higher institute of learning and that I would have to do more research ... I ended up being reluctant in research and dependant on the teachers rather than being an independent thinker. Thus, I was disappointed. I expected that a lecturer would probably give guidelines, give an outline and meet you once in a while to guide you, you submit your research or your findings from the internet, and he would look at it and return to you even if it's on a typical contact basis. I expected to be helped to realise the world on my own self and to find information outside there on my own instead of being spoon-fed [MAK4 – Kenyan].*

This quotation clearly reveals the desire for self-directed learning but with guidance provided by the lecturers. Duby and Fischer (2011) consider self-directed learning to be an approach that relies less on centralised teaching activities and more on student-driven learning processes. I argue that, for self-directed learning to be actively implemented in an institution, there must be top management support. In addition, it must be included in the design of the curriculum otherwise it may be abused by facilitators who may relinquish their guidance function in the learning process in the belief that self-driven learning is all-encompassing. Furthermore, depending on the academic tradition to which the students were earlier exposed earlier to in their academic life, in the event that their new academic engagement does not fit this earlier academic tradition and compares unfavourably with it, feelings of dissatisfaction with the teaching and learning processes often emerge. Similar undertones emerged during the interviews when the teaching and learning experience at KIU were compared with those in the home country. One respondent revealed that:

*... as students, we are not really challenged in the sense that, whatever you have in the coursework, the notes actually were given, we are supposed to be assessed on that ... It's in a way spoon-feeding. It's exactly what you will see in the notes that will appear in the test. There is nothing where you are supposed to analyse the concepts that you have gotten from the lecturer ... I don't approve of this method. Actually, what I believe in is that we are supposed to think, brainstorm and get a concept of something ... Back home, what used to happen at my former institution was you were given notes, reference books and all kinds of materials but, at the end of the day, it's not like you were given the exact questions or examples of your papers. Instead, you were supposed to use the concepts that you got from examples, books and everything and use them to write an exam. So, to me, I think that is*

*the type of education I would like to receive and which is different from what am getting here [KIU13 – Zambian].*

What emerged clearly from these quotations was a feeling of dissatisfaction with the classroom teaching and learning approaches applied and as evaluated by the students. This finding is in line with the view of Núñez and León (2015) that students exhibit diverse attitudes in a learning environment which are, in the main, occasioned by the lecturer and which impact either positively or negatively on their conceptualisation of the content. It is apparent from the quotations that the home country classroom and learning experience was considered to be superior to those to which they were now being exposed. Although differences in classroom teaching and learning are evident, as the findings indicated, this did provide the students with the opportunity not to remain entrenched in their home country academic experience but, instead, to view the world from another angle with different learning styles and wide academic experiences (Goldschmidt, Ousey, & Brown, 2010). The fact that student mobility the higher education space is increasing means that the international students are gaining new experiences in foreign education systems (Egesah & Wahome, 2017). It has been observed that learning takes place both in the classroom & outside of the classroom when internships are included in a course of study (Cremers,Wals, Wesselink, & Mulder 2016).This study established that internship, as a learning style, is applied in the courses offered.Two of the respondents had the following to say:

*... when I was in second year I used to work as an assistant filmmaker to a film producer. He would ask me for a lens and I would give it to him, ask me to swing a boom, I would swing it just to see how things are going and I can say that thus really propelled me to be where I am right now” [MAK7 – Kenyan] and*

*...we have been able to imitate what happens outside in the court system because the university has been involving us in the moot court competition. Personally, I have participated in two moot courts: one in Nairobi last year in July and in September 2016 we were in Silver Spring in Uganda mooting on International Humanitarian Law so I have achieved a lot [KIU12 -Kenyan].*

It was observed that internship placement provides the students with an opportunity to relate the theory learned in class tod engagement with hands on practice in a work environment while they nurture networks. The following quote illustrates this aspect of technical networking which is offered by internships:

*I have been able to move around and make connections with the companies where I did my internship in Uganda at Roofings and Eskom Uganda Ltd. I have been able to establish contacts in these companies and it's fine for me [KIU14 – DRC Congo].*

It is clear from this quotation that, as an academic undertaking, internships offer the students the opportunity to learn the importance of personal responsibility in the work setting and its role in professional development while also meeting the curriculum requirements in order to qualify on completion of the internship period (Reinagel & Gerlach, 2015). Given that internship is a learning approach which takes place outside of the classroom environment in a workplace setting, the dynamics are governed under the broad student-faculty relationship operating under the policies, structures, and systems of the host organisation although, in some cases, the role of the host organisation remains unclear. In this vein, Poortman (2007), cited in Cremers, Wals, Wesselink, and Mulder (2016), discussed the notion that the internship placement of students in a working environment is riddled with challenges and that it not able to support quality learning in cases characterised hurriedly made contractual responsibilities and poor coordination between the university and the host organisation. Similarly, Goodwin and Mbah (2017) pointed out that the lack of proper internship administration sometimes leave the students unclear about the roles and the administrative support they may expect during the internship period. In a much broader study on “University students’ learning experiences: Nuanced voices from graduate tracer study” conducted at Moi University in Kenya, in respect to learning and curriculum delivery, Egesah and Wahome (2017) established that field courses that involve field work and demonstrations scored low and were also not used extensively, thus denying students the opportunity to learn in a setting other than the classroom. Gleaned from the study findings and the literature, it is argued that classroom teaching and learning processes will yield positive experiences only if the university, the lecturers and the learners think alike in respect to its utility and also take into account that each party has a specific role to play and at a specific time but with varying levels of participation.

### **6.2.3. Student-Faculty Relationship**

A quality environment that builds effective communication and mutual trust between students and faculty with minimal conflict is a necessary precondition if effective teaching and learning are to occur. It is argued that, when the environment is perceived as welcoming and inclusive, students will react positively to exciting and challenging learning activities (Núñez & León, 2015). This

suggests that it is incumbent on both the university and faculty both to create a friendly classroom environment in which the students they feel they belong as members and to ensure that delivery is based on what motivates students to participate in the academic processes which have been designed. A teaching style which offers autonomy to students ensures a motivating classroom environment rather than a controlled teaching style which breeds feelings of disrespect, resentment and passivity in classroom activities. It is argued that, in a supportive learning environment, there is a good feeling with staff members involving students in their academic engagement, thus breeding a collegial spirit between the parties. In such a professional relationship the desire to transmit skills and knowledge through such mentorship is communicated to the students with the teaching-learning process being seen as a noble endeavour to build the capacity of the young generation. The interviews data for both MAK and KIU pointed overwhelmingly to healthy and cordial student-faculty relationships, although a few of the respondents did mention the existence of unhealthy relationships. In respect to relationship, one of the respondents had this to say about the lecturers:

*They have a good relationship with students. If our lecturer is not in class, you can pick up your phone and call him that “Sir, we have your class now” and he does not take offence or anything. But, there in Nigeria, you cannot just pick up your phone and call a lecturer that he has a lecture now. Here lecturers will listen ear to your problems if they can help you they will help you [KIU4 – Nigerian].*

*The relationship, it depends on the person, because we have lecturers whom, at times, students find it easy to approach and have a conversation, a talk mainly on academics and also we have some lecturers who are really strict that, even before going to their offices, you have to think twice. “Generally, I can say it’s good not bad and there is a willingness to help across the board” [MAK6 – Kenyan].*

Furthermore, in respect to the unhealthy relationships mentioned, one of the respondents declared:

*“Well, it’s somehow not fair but somehow fair. Fair in the sense that we when interact with these lecturers they are not bad, they are really good. You know they will talk to you, they will give you notes, you know. We are free to talk to them. We can call them and they are at our disposal, actually, but there is also bias. When it comes to allocation of marks we*

*are not treated equally with the Ugandans. Some Ugandan lecturers, to be specific, favour Ugandan students [KIU13 – Zambian]. Similarly, another student stated*

*... there is a certain problem in the lecturer-student relationship, especially when it comes to issues to do with marks ... When I went to complain the lecturer asked me where I came from ... I was amazed that, at the end of the day, he worked on some of the people and did not work on mine. Good enough, I didn't get a retake but I had expected not to get those marks but, to avoid more problems ... I just had to leave it and accepted the marks that were given to me. I was not convinced by these marks. Personally I didn't have a problem with the lecturer but the way I approached him and how he responded to me I felt intimidated and that's the reason I never went back to follow up on those marks [MAK13 – South Sudanese].*

According to Oorschot (2014), when a student identifies something is puzzling about a teacher's actions, approaching the teacher often generates anxiety while it also requires courage to raise the matter because of the teacher's power and authority. The aggressiveness on the part of the lecturer mentioned in the quotation indicates a weakness in the faculty member and could be an indication of capacity gaps in managing relations in a multicultural class (Bekiari, Deliligkaand, & Koustelios, 2017). Egesah and Wahome (2017, p. 44) maintain that recent trends in university efforts to ensure quality teaching and learning have resulted from applying student feedback on a number of dimensions assessed by students, including lecturer-student relationships and lecturer approachability. The highlighted that the use of student feedback is intended to improve the learning environment, ensure better delivery of service and improve courses. In light of its centrality, it is argued that the student-faculty relationship forms the basis for successful teaching and learning during field internships, outreach programmes and mentorship in research and publications and in the acquisition of skills, attitude, competences and values appropriate in the labour market. In this arrangement effective communication, mutual trust and feedback are paramount. Linked to the student-faculty relationship is a partnership in the. The next subsection focuses on the presentation and discussion of the findings on academic demands and or load as discussed in the next session.

#### **6.2.4. Academic Demand and/or Load**

Given their mandate to operate as institutions of learning, in the application of their expertise universities have a monopoly in respect of designing programmes, courses, curriculum content and expected learning outcomes. In Uganda, before launching the programmes and courses they

have designed, universities are required to submit these for accreditation by the National Council for Higher Education as mandated in the University and Other Tertiary Institutions Act(2001) as amended (2006, 2008). The academic load is, therefore, determined when accreditation is provided. This study established that the majority of the international students were satisfied with the academic load and its content despite the fact that feelings about its inadequacy and delivery were also expressed by some of the students. In the following quotations the respondents express their satisfaction with the academic load and its content:

*...am happy about the course load and, actually, by the time I went back home for internship, I was much happier because the things that I found at the workplace and I was supposed to do, at least I had an idea about them [MAK13 – South Sudanese].*

This quotation affirms how the curriculum design and delivery was fulfilling the student's expectation and, when put into practice, was meeting the needs of the community. Informed by the desire to see the applicability of course content in the field, an interviewee stated:

*... the content satisfies my expectation in that, being a law student, I wanted to get what I am learning today and apply it in the field. I see that it is actually what is required in the field as I have been exposed to court. I have seen what lawyers actually litigate outside there and what we learn here at school, it's the same, so I think I have gotten the best [KIU12 – Kenyan].*

The quotations above are in line with Goodwin and Mbah's (2016, p. 9) observation that universities should apply the curriculum to mentor and prepare their students to cope in the competitive global employment market. While some of the respondent indicated their satisfaction with the academic load and content, some expressed apprehension about lecturers' course delivery:

*When you look at the course content it is so good, like, clear and you really expect to learn a lot from it as it is but, now, the problem is when what is there is not taught according to the way in which it has been arranged. You find that if, today, you are supposed to study a certain topic and the lecturer doesn't show up, like, for two days, the things that he was supposed to lecture on a specific day and time, when he comes he has to merge, like, three of them together. It becomes hard [MAK6 – Kenyan].*



This revelation raised the issue of the quality of delivery especially when the contents of three different topics are presented in a rushed nature in order to complete the syllabus. It is highly likely that, in such circumstances, as the response indicated, that fewer teaching and learning activities will be carried out with limited interaction and involvement and this, ultimately, not achieving the anticipated learning outcomes (Skolnik, 2016, p. 336). Linked to apprehensions about course delivery is the dissatisfaction with content that emerged as revealed during interviews as:

*As a student, I can't say I was satisfied with the content, it really needed something to be added ... we needed more guidance and the issue was the guidelines ... they were too brief but, at least, they tried ... the theory part is ok but the practical part, is still poor. Like some of us, you choose a career and you did not have any idea about it so if, at school, you do not know exactly what you are doing, it will be hard when you go into the field. Practically they are less and the ones that we need, the basics, are not really there [KIU9 – Rwandese].*

In light of these findings, I contend that the day-to-day teaching and learning activities implemented in a classroom setting and during internship give the students an impression as to whether or not these activities, ultimately, make a contribution to the designed learning outcomes. In line with the different education systems with which international students engage, hence their multiple teaching and learning experiences, the findings established that, in the Ugandan education system, the academic load offered is less demanding than that of education systems but that it does incorporate relevant course units as compared to other countries which offer multiple course units that do not build the students' professional careers. This is illustrated in the following quotations:

*... but, in Congo, when you are doing Biology and Chemistry, you will do not only those two courses but you will do geography, history, all those fields [KIU5 – DRC Congo].*

*In Nigeria you do cross-cutting courses, for example, Biology, Physics, Chemistry while you are studying Computer Science but, in Uganda, you specialise in what you are doing” [KIU3– Nigerian].*

These quotations illuminate the quality of the curriculum design as approved by the accreditation bodies in the countries mentioned. In addition, the findings indicated cases where respondents expressed their view that the academic load was burdensome, for example:

*... there is no sleeping, you have to read seriously [MAK3 - Burundian].*

*...Coming to the fourth year, everything is practical and everyone left, right and centre, are running around. The lecturers are generous with course work and then, project work, so, now, we are not sleeping. Personally, I have to be on my laptop all the time and, at some point, I am also thinking of taking a year's sabbatical just to take a rest ... right now, it is a lot and a mouthful [MAK7 -Kenyan].*

These quotations are in line with the Townsend and Poh's (2008, p. 253) findings that international students experience challenges in coping with the academic demands of the courses they pursue while Donnelly, McCormack, and Rimmer (2007, p. 614) warn that, when the academic load becomes excessive, it affects the academic performance of students. However, even when the course content was seen as heavy and apprehensive about the both the content and course delivery, the international students still regarded the quality of the education they were receiving as far better as compared to that offered in the home country.

#### **6.2.5. Personal and Professional Impact of Study in Uganda**

The academic outcome is a by-product of the designed, approved and delivered curriculum content over the period of an academic programme. Melnick, Kaur, and Yu (2011) have shown that a student's ability to nurture and build a strong social network during study abroad creates in the student a strong capacity to cope with life and perform well academically. On this point, Donnelly et al. (2007) argue that, when an international student performs well academically, it signifies that he/she is well integrated into the academic systems and traditions of the host country. In this vein, Kettle (2011) describes academic integration as the immersion into the academic practice of a university which involves predetermined approaches to the knowing and task accomplishment that make up the academic task. It is argued that learning outcomes at a personal and professional level are achieved in small, successive steps during engagement with the academic programme. In line with this view, the interviews data analysed illuminated what the international students saw as the impact of their study in Uganda at the time of the interviews. In view of the fact that this was based on opinions based on self-assessment by the international students, the information was derived and represents the respondents' voices in the study.

Specific to the personal impact and based on their self-rated experiences the respondents had the following to say:

*... my social life has become better ... I have made very many friends at MAK. I have been accorded respect as a result of my studying here because, when I am in Burundi, people respect me because they know that I am at MAK. "...That is the type of respect that MAK has given me [MAK3– Burundian].*

*... it has given me a chance to know the characters of different people, learn about Ugandans and other countries, actually that is the advantage of being at an international school [KIU6 – South Sudan].*

These responses support Parey and Waldinger's (2011) finding that interest in understanding foreign culture is one of the strategies which international students value in achieving diversity management skills in preparation for employment in the international labour market. My argument is that exposure to a new and unfamiliar foreign environment triggers a change in our worldviews which is occasioned by the new dynamics of life that challenge the earlier assumptions and biases inherent in individuals. Similarly, exposure to unfamiliar people, systems, cultures and a way of life require of the international students a high level of emotional intelligence which, according to Abe et al. (2013), is a key factor in the level of satisfaction after self-reflection on life experiences. In line with this view on self-reflection, one student stated that:

*...I have changed in terms of thinking and interacting with people. I really feel like I am no longer the same person I was when I arrived ... I see things in a different way and it has taught me to be patient because the challenges showed me that, even when there is nothing you can do about them, you just have to put up with them [KIU9 – Rwandese].*

*...i have acquired an independent mind, having studied away from home. I can stand jungle or desert [MAK4 – Kenyan].*

*I think those class presentations just give us confidence ... now I can stand up in front of people to explain issues which I could not do before joining MAK [MAK8 -Tanzanian].*

The quotations above appear to indicate that the students discovered their own abilities as a result of studying in Uganda and had developed confidence in their capacity to read situations, challenge existing assumptions and present their own conceptualisation of reality. This signifies a high-level cognitive thinking capacity as reflected in analysis, synthesis and evaluation in Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives (Bloom, 1964). A similar impact identified was with respect to leadership capacity which one of the many respondents described as follows:

*I have been the president of the Society for Engineering Students here at KIU and I came not knowing English so I had to go through English courses. Being in that leadership position pushed me to improve...and boosted my personal growth [KIU14 – Congolese].*

*MAK has spurred me on to identify the direction of my dream. I am exposed to academic ethical research which I want in my academic and professional life [MAK14 - Cameroonian].*

Reflecting on the quotations above and taking into account international students' past life experiences, their current engagement in academic study abroad and their future aspirations, desires and expectation, it is argued that the personal impact of studying in Uganda was informed by the discovery of previously unknown potential or existing gaps in their personal lives. It is further argued that study abroad offered them an opportunity for self-discovery which probably would not have been the case if they had been in a domestic study environment. These views resonate well with Oorschot's (2014) assertion that knowledge is useful if students use it to think critically and to evaluate themselves based on the facts and theories to which they are exposed in order to develop a more positive self-concept.

In respect to the professional impact of study abroad, on a self-rated basis the respondents again gave their opinions based on their current level of engagement with classroom teaching and their internship experiences. Oorschot (2014) established that international students were satisfied with Institute of Housing Studies (IHS) in Rotterdam in the Netherlands for delivering a course where they connected theory and practice, thus enhancing their professional understanding rather than relying heavily on a theoretical curriculum. Professional knowledge and professionalism implies that, within one's line of specialisation, the individual exhibits high levels of competence and acumen, belongs to professional networks, is informed about the current trends in the discipline, demonstrates a strong technical acumen: possesses knowledge as well as the ability to comprehend, apply, analyse and synthesise issues and makes decisions based on options which have been evaluated. While the abovementioned dimension of Bloom (1964) may appear to be demanding, it represents a clear indication of the grasp of technical knowledge relating to a profession. The anticipated benefit derived from this self-rated competence gained from study in Uganda is that this competence may act as an input into future curriculum reviews to identify the

specific skills which should be developed as a learning outcome in specific disciplines. The individual rating was conducted based on the dimensions presented in table. 3 below.

**Table 6. 3: Categorisation of the importance of the competence acquired by international students at Makerere University**

Dimension	Mean	% Mean	Cum % Mean
General knowledge	4.39	8	8
Knowledge of a particular field/discipline	4.37	8	16
Ability to solve problems	4.31	7	23
Ability to understand people from different cultures	4.31	7	30
Academic writing skills	4.30	7	37
Preparation for a job	4.27	7	44
English language ability	4.24	7	51
Research skills	4.22	7	58
Ability to work comparatively	4.12	7	65
Computer skills	4.10	7	72
Knowledge of Uganda	4.08	7	79
Public speaking ability	4.00	7	86
Knowledge of my own culture	3.87	7	93
Mathematical skills	3.80	7	100

**Source:** MAK analysed survey data 2017-2018.

During the data analysis and in order to place the competences acquired in order of importance, dimensions against which the students had rated themselves were categorised in accordance with the 80:20% rule (see Table 6.3 above and Table 6.4 below). In respect of MAK 79% of the dimensions ranked in order of importance included general knowledge, knowledge of a particular field or discipline, ability to solve problems, ability to understand people from different cultures, academic writing skills, preparation for a job, English language ability, research skills, ability to work cooperatively, computer skills and knowledge of Uganda. The least rated fields at MAK were mathematical skills, knowledge of my own culture and, lastly, public speaking ability. Mathematical skills and knowledge of my own culture, rated as 3.80 and 3.87 respectively, corresponded to “no change” in competence gained according to the Likert scale. This may have implied that the curriculum in place was not sufficiently challenging to motivate the international

students to invest more effort in the learning process. Similarly, the public speaking ability achieved the lowest score but with a “stronger” rating on the Likert scale.

**Table 6. 4: Categorisation of the importance of the competences acquired by the international students at Kampala International University**

Dimension	Mean	% Mean	Cum % Mean
Ability to understand people from different cultures	4.13	8	8
Knowledge of a particular field/discipline	4.08	7	15
General knowledge	4.04	7	22
Public speaking ability	4.03	7	30
Ability to solve problems	4.00	7	37
Preparation for a job	3.95	7	44
Academic writing skills	3.95	7	51
English language ability	3.94	7	58
Computer skills	3.92	7	65
Research skills	3.92	7	72
Ability to work comparatively	3.91	7	79
Knowledge of Uganda	3.78	7	86
Knowledge of my own culture	3.62	7	93
Mathematical skills	3.55	7	100

**Source:** *KIU analysed survey data 2017–2018.*

As indicated in Table 6.4 above and based on the mean scores for each factor, the findings in respect of KIU and based on a self-rated assessment in order of ranking of the competences acquired were: ability to understand people of different cultures, knowledge of a particular field or discipline, general knowledge, public speaking, ability to solve problems, preparation for a job, academic writing skills, English language ability, computer skills, research skills and ability to work cooperatively while the lowest rated dimensions were: mathematical skills (M = 3.35), knowledge of my own culture (M = 3.62) and knowledge of Uganda (3.78) which were under the “no change” category in the Likert Scale. This may have implied that the curriculum in place was not sufficiently challenging to motivate the international students to invest more effort in learning mathematical concepts, whereas knowledge about Uganda “not changing” appeared to imply that there were few field trips undertaken for touring and academic purpose and through which the

international students would have engaged with different groups of people, thus gaining a better understanding of Uganda.

However, it may be observed from the descriptive statistics that MAK posted an average mean score of 4.17 which falls under the Likert scale category of “stronger”, thus implying that the competencies of the international students has improved significantly since they had first enrolled at MAK. On the other hand, the average mean score established for KIU was 3.92 which, on the Likert scale, corresponds to “no change “in their competence since enrolment. This finding of no change in competences gained was somewhat strange. The dimensions used in assessing the levels of competences acquired had a correlation of 0.84 between the competencies registered by international students at MAK and KIU. This high positive correlation implies that the dimensions in competence registered have a similar impact at both institutions. This was evident is observable in in Table 6.3 and Table 6.4 which showed that the first four dimensions of competences acquired in order of ranking for MAK and KIU were in respect of general knowledge, ability to understand people from different culture and knowledge of a particular field/discipline although the rankings were different. However, ability to solve problems and public speaking ability emerged as the fourth competency acquired specific to MAK and KIU respectively. Although they were ranked fourth in each institution, it formed the major difference of competence qacquired by international students in the two institutions.

The data from the qualitative interviews validated the findings from the survey through the quotations that were cited in respect of the competences acquired. In respect of Bloom’s taxonomy (1964) as a point of reference with which to focus on the professional benefit derived by the international students’ study in Uganda, one respondent opined that: *“When I came to KIU I was an end user in the field of computer science but now I am not an end user, I am among computer scientists because ... I innovated new things. I designed a website and I design web sites now because of the skills I have acquired with the help of KIU”* [KIU3 – Nigerian]. Another respondent cited his self-rated impact as *“every semester I go to a hospital for attachment, practise doing hose laboratory tests and you really see that those are the things to do after graduation”* [MAK10 - South Sudanese]. Similarly one of the respondents stated that: *“I have learned how to practically undertake some work and can apply the software that they use for civil works and I am good at it*

[KIU1 -Somali]. Seeming excited about his professional contacts, a respondent described the impact on him as:

*...I am growing as a professional because I am in contact with more researchers and professors. I participate in different meetings and seminars, I know much more about my profession. For example, I was part of a systems investigation here in Uganda and I wrote daily and weekly reports in a prescribed format ... so, as a professional, I am improving on that aspect of research [MAK15 – Somali].*

It may be discerned from the responses above the international students appeared to have attained high levels of cognitive competence reflecting Bloom's taxonomy (1964) of the educational objectives of learning. While there was no pre-self-evaluation before engaging with the academic programme, the responses from the interviews succinctly indicated the acquisition of technical knowledge and competence from the classroom sessions and the ability to apply this in the different disciplines. It may, therefore, be argued that, based on the self-rated assessments the international students believed that they had attained personal and professional growth. These findings on professional gains agree with the view of Garcia, Robertson, Lougheed, Tweedie, and Velasco (2013, p. 72) that undergraduate field research and placement helps the student to apply the knowledge and concepts learned in theory in a work environment. They argue further that, when students participate in academic research which corresponds with their topics of interest, this triggers an inner drive to pursue further academic and professional goals by enrolling in further studies.

### **6.3. Approaches to improve the Service delivered to International Students**

Service delivery improvement denotes inadequacies in the existing current service being offered. In the higher education context service delivery improvement is grounded on the existing concern about the quality of higher education worldwide which has resulted from the massification of higher education to meet the rising demand for such education but within a context of reduced state funding (Quinn, Lemay, Larsen, & Johnson, 2009). This being the case and with the universities raising their internal revenue from tuition fees paid, it is becoming increasingly important to focus on the views of students in respect of their satisfaction with education service provided in order to avoid numbers dropping (Wright & O'Neil, 2002). The drive to achieve quality service delivery demands regular quality evaluation and improvement with the views of students, as key stakeholders with diverse needs, expectations, aspirations, and goals, providing a



sound indication to higher education institutions of the need to amend their approaches and curriculum should the assessments so indicate. Based on their academic experiences which have resulted from their interaction and engagement with the universities and their curricula, interesting revelations emerged when the international students were asked to indicate approaches the universities could deploy to improve the services they were providing. For example, in respect to accommodation, there was a common view expressed that the university should provide international students with accommodation in view of the fact they are coming to a foreign country with no knowledge about accommodation and safety and must find their own accommodation with all the associated risks. Even in cases in which the university did offer accommodation facilities, international students were seemingly informed about their eligibility in respect of applying for these residence. A respondent declared, “... *most internationals don't stay in the university halls of residence because they are not offered a chance to apply. I came here but never knew that international students have a hall where they may stay and they don't know either but the university could advertise and the place open to internationals to get a space in the university halls because they are cheap and safer. So, I think that could be a key service the university could provide to international students*” [MAK1 – Kenyan]. In agreement with the preceding views, a respondent from KIU reasoned as follows: “...*they have to construct a hostel for international student because international students come to Uganda and do not know places of accommodation very well*” [KIU10 – Somali]. In line with this finding, Swali (2014) is of the opinion that the university has a legal, moral and ethical responsibility to help international students to settle comfortably in a new academic environment the moment it admits and registers them.

Similar to Swali's (2014) view that the university is obliged to help international students to settle in their new environment, one of the respondents stated that “*it makes it easier and shortens the process of admission ... for example, if you apply in March, after one or two months your results should be out ... the admission process opened in March 2017 but I had to wait for feedback in August. Similarly it is recommended that the university should facilitate the process of getting visas and permits for international students; and also establish an international students' committee or appoint someone in charge to collect all the information from the students to process their travel documents* [MAK15 – Somali].

Further suggestions were made with respect of opening up communication channels between the international students and university management, using international student associations to resolve their issues and enabling participation through consultation in matters that affected them. To this end, it was recommended that *“the university should organise forums and invite international students to participate in such forums and propose ways they think the service delivery could be improved”* [MAK2 – Kenyan]. In line with this reasoning, another respondent suggested that: *“...students and university administrators should have a meeting every semester in the form of an open lecture where the students ask questions and receive answers there and then. I believe when people interact it is where solutions are found”* [KIU9 – Rwandese]. In this vein, it was also suggested that *“...the university should recognise and give the international student association much more time so that when there is any problem the association can intervene and, together with university management, solve the problem”* [KIU8 – Nigerian]. The payment of fees in a different currency was cited as a huge challenge with one of the respondents stating: *“... there should be a universal fee payment option for all students, regardless of nationality”* [MAK1 – Kenyan]. *“International students pay their tuition fees in dollars while Ugandan students pay in Ugandan shillings. If you compare these fees, you can see we pay twice the Ugandan fees paid in shillings. It is the only thing that is bad here”* [KIU5 – Congolese]. Similar to this view was an idea mooted that *“... the payment of tuition fees should be direct from home to here [KIU account] and ... scale down late tuition fees payment charges which add up to \$150 in a semester and is a challenge to parents...”* [KIU7 – Nigerian].

In view of the fact that internship is a compulsory academic requirement, the practice at the time of the study was that students were given letters of introduction but had to identify organisations where they could do their internships on their own. In order to relieve the international students of the burden of searching for such organisations in an unfamiliar environment, a respondent had this to say: *“I recommend that the university identify organisations for placement but provide first priority to international students”* [MAK11 – Ethiopian]. This assertion is in line with Zunz and Oil’s (2009) study findings that international students find it difficult to identify organisations that meet their linguistic and cultural needs in a foreign environment and also that access to public transport during internship placement often presents a problem. In respect of the language barrier, it is recommended that the university, with its capacity to identify organisation which could provide appropriate professional mentors with the linguistic

competence to assist international students assist the international students. This type of approach would mean that the internship experience would be an enriching experience for the international students as a service offered by the university despite the fact that, according to Reinigel and Gerlach (2015, p. 71), the widespread nature of international students' needs and expectations in respect of internship makes it difficult to ensure that internship is a wholesome, positive experience for them.

#### **6.4. Plans to recommend Prospective Students to study at a Ugandan University**

Wright and O'Neill (2002) contend that, in order to meet the needs of the students, it is essential that higher education institutions deploy all the means at their disposal to do this. In addition, Quinn et al. (2009) suggest that data should be collected to show the level of satisfaction derived from the improved services rendered by a higher education. Having accessed a wide range of academic experiences, including the personal and professional impact of the study experience at MAK and KIU as well as the perception of the service delivered, the study sought to ascertain the international students' future plans. The survey interrogated the international students' future plans in respect to four dimensions with the results from the descriptive analysis of the survey being presented in Tables 6.5 and 6.6 below.

**Table 6. 5: Categorisation of future plans of international students at Makerere University**

Dimension	Mean	% Mean	Cum % Mean
Complete my current education/degree	1.27	16	16
Work at my next job	2.12	26	42
Work at my ideal/future job	2.19	27	69
Pursue my next phase of education/degree	2.52	31	100

**Source:** MAK analysed raw data 2017–2018

**Table 6. 6: Categorisation of future plans of international students at Kampala International University**

Dimension	Mean	% Mean	Cum % Mean
Complete my current education/degree	1.41	17	17
Work at my ideal/future job	2.36	28	44
Work at my next job	2.37	28	72
Pursue my next phase of education/degree	2.39	28	100

**Source:** KIU analysed raw data 2017–2018

The average mean score for MAK was established as 2.03 and for KIU 2.13 which corresponded with the Likert scale category of “return to home country”, thus implying that the international students had a strong desire to return home on completion of their studies. The findings suggest that the international students’ future would be better at home than it would be if they stayed in Uganda. A correlation of 0.95 suggested that the impact of the dimension in table 6.5 and 6.6 on both MAK and KIU respectively on international students’ future plan decisions was the same. Applying the 80:20% rule, as shown in Table 6.5, the MAK international students ranked the following dimensions as important, namely, complete my current education/degree, work at my next job and, lastly, work at my ideal/future job. The field which scored the lowest pursue my next phase of education/degree. The KIU’s students’ categorisation of the importance of the dimension, as illustrated in Table 6.6 were ranked as: complete my current education/ degree, work at my ideal/future job and work at my next job with the dimension with the lowest score being pursue the next phase of my education/degree. The finding that both the MAK and the KIU students ranking as lowest the desire to continue with their higher education may seem to indicate that they were content with the educational programme and qualification that they were pursuing at the time of the study.

The perception of service satisfaction motivates a service beneficiary to refer potential clients to the same service. While it is recognised that measuring customer satisfaction in a higher education environment is challenging within the context of the three dimensions of academic engagement, administrative functions and supportive or auxiliary services (Quinn et al., 2009, p. 139), it is, nevertheless, important that the perceptions of its clients are sought. In order to augment the survey findings on future plans, the international students' opinion was sought in respect to their intentions to recommend MAK and KIU to their friends, family, and relatives in the home country. The findings established a strong desire to recommend prospective students despite the few expressions of dissent or reservation. One of the respondent cited the reason for such recommendation of MAK as “... because of its reputation of being ranked among the first 10 African universities ... Secondly, it has expertise in different fields, probably because this university is old, has a history and respected” [MAK12 – Rwandese].

Following the same line of reasoning, a respondent justified such recommendation of KIU as based on “the way that lectures are conducted, lecturers' approachability and how they help students and the ranking of the university as the best private university in Uganda” [KIU11 – Somali]. In addition, yet another student based on the justification for the recommendation of KIU on “... being an international institution, opportunity to get exposure in a diverse student community and adventure as you travel and see” [KIU12 – Kenyan]. Yet again a respondent's reason for the recommendation of MAK was “because of the amount of research work done, I find fees payment in this university is very good because you can come and study the whole semester without paying a penny and the only day when they put the pressure is during the exams” [MAK6 – Kenyan]. This is considered positive in the sense that students with financial challenges can mobilize tuition over time as they study without major interruptions by university management for non-payment of fees. In addition, it was stated by MAK4 – Kenyan that MAK is one of the institutions which charges affordable fees as compared to other universities. Similarly, “serious reading, a lot of learning, a good learning environment ... and the way you have entered Makerere is not the way you will get out. You will come out a better man” [MAK3 – Burundian]; “because it is the best institution offering the best education and knowledge, has good teachers” [MAK2 – Kenyan]. A similar recommendation in respect of KIU was that “because it is one of the biggest and chartered universities in Uganda, has a better learning environment and infrastructure” [KIU4 – Nigerian].

However, the study also found that some of international students expressed reservations about offering recommendations to prospective students: One respondent opined: *“Actually, I would recommend someone but, when it comes to my department I, would not absolutely not”* [KIU13 - Zambian]. Yet another stated that: *“I couldn’t recommend anyone to come because there is no civil laboratory but, for other courses, I would recommend it”* [KIU6 – South Sudan]. A seemingly heavily loaded reservation was stated as: *“personally I don’t really feel like international students should come here because, as an international student, the academic part of it, I didn’t really approve the way they treat internationals with no special care yet we pay double fees. It’s still on a low level, at least, if they improve I would recommend it to an international student but, as long as you are a Ugandan, you can join KIU”* [KIU9 – Rwandese]. These quotations are in line with the findings of Quinn et al. (2009) that it is essential that higher education institutions which aim to provide a better quality of service meet customer expectations but with the focus on the student interests which indicate areas that require improvement. Quinn et al. (2009) further observed that differences in both approach and customer needs, expectations and desires make it difficult to design, implement and achieve an entire university strategy for quality service improvement. Given that the focus of this study was on international students who are considered as principal stakeholders of the university, their opinion was on appropriate strategies universities could implement to achieve higher enrolment figures the next section discusses the findings on this issue.

### **6.5. Strategies to attract International Students to Enrol**

Encouraging international students to enrol in academic programmes has become an important business engagement of higher education institutions in the contemporary higher education market. The drive to recruit international students is informed by their contributory justification (Flacher & Kermadec, 2013) in the sense that the tuition fees they pay contribute to the cost of running the institution, ensuring that the best lecturers are employed, supporting research work and capacity and improving working conditions are made better and, thus, enhancing the quality of education provided. Institutions adopt diverse approaches to recruiting international students. For example, Staniscia (2012) highlights how countries with internationalisation intentions develop favourable policies aimed at attracting international students into their countries with such policies including relaxing the immigration requirements, providing temporary employment permits, not limiting the hours of employment per week and offering scholarships. While this is at the national level, university based strategies are also designed to attract international students. In

this study, when asked to offer suggestions on the strategies the university could adopt and apply to attract international students, various suggestions were made. For example, a respondent stated: “... sometimes our website lacks information they should put in much more about how international students can be admitted and about the courses” [MAK3 – Burundian]. In addition, reconstructing the public image of the university was cited as important with a respondent stating: “We need confidence. These staff strikes are not encouraging...with what is always happening” [MAK4 – Kenyan]. Similar concerns about strikes were noted as follows in the Makerere University Visitation Report:

“... the increasing propensity of staff going on strike with a concomitant student dissension to escalate into demonstration causes immense socioeconomic disruptions in government programmes besides causing public anxiety among many key stakeholders, including sponsors and the taxpayers that bankroll students’ education. It is evident that the intermittent staff and student unrest emanates from governance/structural shortfalls and inefficiencies, student consciousness and external factors which demand insightful assessment and evaluation” (MAK Visitation Report, 2016)

It is clear from both the quotations and the report that strikes have tarnished the reputation of MAK. This may impact adversely on the decisions of prospective students to enrol at MAK, given the risks, uncertainties and financial and stress associated with strikes. In order to attract more international students, a respondent suggested that “they should check on the tuition fees because most international students, especially when not part of the East African Community, pay double tuition fees compared to Ugandans ... the university should initiate more support services and scholarships for the international students to relieve them of the burden of tuition fees” [MAK10 – South Sudanese]. This strategy agrees with Hubner’s (2012) finding that the introduction of tuition fees in the German states negatively affected the enrolment decision of high school leavers due to affordability concerns. Similar findings on effect of tuition fees on the enrolment of students from low and middle-income families and students living away from their homes were observed in Canada (Neill, 2009). Based on the literature and the findings of this study it would seem that the issue of tuition fees is a subject of private discussion among current international students as well as potential applicants and, thus, that it is a concern that should be addressed. Neill (2009, p. 563) further revealed that a reduction in tuition fees in Newfoundland had been sanctioned as a reaction to a possible decline in student enrolment. The literature cited provides reference to the

suggestion that the tuition fees be reviewed if more international students are to be attracted to the MAK and KIU.

In respect to addressing the issue of travel documents for international students as a strategy to be adopted to attract international students, a respondent noted that:

*The university should create a board that links up with the immigration office. The students would submit their applications for visas, permits and passport documents to this board for scrutiny. When satisfied with the documents that have been submitted, the university, through the board it has appointed, would submit the documents to the immigration. The immigration would process the documents and the student would only to pick the visa, permit or passport. Rather than students going to the immigration themselves ... This, therefore, should be the role of the university [MAK14 – Cameroonian].*

Another respondent suggested that: *“When the university has a programme it should advertise in other countries for those interested as the new intake for admission to apply. That type of advertisement is not placed”* [MAK15 – Somali]. A similar view was expressed as follows: *“open up more marketing office in other countries”* [KIU2 – Nigerian]. In addition, it was suggested that *“treat the current international students well, if we are treated well, we can tell others”* [MAK9 – Tanzanian]. Also posted was: *“build learning facilities that benefit the students”* [KIU11 – Somali]. It seems both appropriate and reasonable for the universities, with their mandate, structure and financial resources, to implement the recommendations suggested by the international students and then investigate the impact of such strategies on subsequent enrolment.

## **6.6. Changes Universities could Adopt to Remain Competitive**

The international students exposure to and engagement with the academic programmes offered at MAK and KIU provided a basis for investigating their lived academic experiences. In light of the prevailing competition for international students, it is incumbent upon the institutions to ensure that that they enable their students to meet their academic goals as this would also act as an incentive for more students to enrol for higher education. However, this will happen when the universities adopts strategies that propel them to the top of the competitive higher education environment. The following comment exemplified this competition: *“treat the current international students well, if we are treated well we can tell others”* [MAK9 – Tanzanian].



Implied in the quotation is the critical role of the current international students' word of mouth to prospective applicants. It is assumed that the international students share their lived academic experiences with others and that potential applicants will use their narratives to gain insights that influence their decision whether or not to enrol at a particular institution. Outhred and Chester (2013) highlighted two possible strategies, namely, a university-wide pastoral care service and a peer mentoring for international students, which could be implemented to remain competitive. Similarly, Lai, To, Lung, and Lai (2012) established that, in order to beat the competition, universities had adopted a strategy of offering scholarships and applying an early admission strategy for international students; as well as widely advertising the academic and research successes of the university based on the university's global ranking (Hezelkorn, 2011). Strategies proposed by the international students for adoption by the universities to remain competitive were varied. One respondent stated that *"they have to prioritise the most pressing thing which affects students, for example, currently it is the issue of fees ... consider some slight fees reduction so that the university can attract more students from outside to join. The level of bureaucracy here should also change slightly to improve on service delivery"* [MAK2 – Kenyan].

Of critical and strategic importance was a recommendation that revealed an immediate change to be implemented as *"accreditation is done step by step but they should take it as a very big challenge because I know a number of students we started studying with abandoned the Engineering course to take up other course in another school in another country only because of the accreditation issue"* [KIU4 -Nigerian]. The view was also presented that *"gazette a permanent position in the student guild council to represent the interest of the international students"* [MAK3 – Burundian]. These responses indicates that the international students have unique needs and challenges that need to be addressed by top university management and yet the students' guild management structure at the time of the study apparently did not provide special opportunities of international students' representation. In addition, a respondent stated: *"... and scholarship opportunities should be made public for everyone to know and everyone is invited to apply"* [MAK3 – Burundian]. Yet a further respondent stated, *"... tackle the issue of tuition fees, scale down the late tuition fees payment charges and change the mode of payment of tuition fees directly from the home country and give international students scholarships based on merit"* [KIU7 – Nigerian] while it was also suggested that *"manage strikes"* [MAK8 – Tanzanian], *"incorporate students' views into university decisions"* [MAK13 – South Sudanese], *"change the*

*administration because of the constant strikes ... I feel like they would have got rid of them. It's as if they want the strikes to take place the way you see strikes every semester. I have seen strikes during semesters 1, 2, 3 and 4*" [MAK11 – Ethiopian], while further changes suggested included: *"revisit the current system of management of examination results which is a big problem in all the faculties .... On graduation provide transcripts and certificates"* [MAK6 – Kenyan]. In addition, a respondent indicated, *"interact with departments to know their problems, provide equipment that tallies with the number of students ... and make every course practical"* [MAK7 – Kenyan], while the following view was also expressed:

*... a university is supposed to provide accommodation to its students in a way that you provide them with security for their lives and property ... The university has no hostel for male students ... you have to go outside and look for a place and you are not sure of its security ... so they should get new hostels for the new male students who could come and stay for a year as they acquaint themselves with the environment and they can get alternative accommodation off campus if they so wish"* [KIU3 – Nigerian].

Based on the strategies suggested and the observations made about their lived academic experiences, it is argued that the international students' voice has indicated areas that need strategic investment of the universities are to become more competitive. However, I observed that inefficiencies in the university management may be the reason why the universities are outstripping their competition. A university would gain a definite competitive advantage if its clients, the students, had a positive perception of its academic processes and support services, and the courses offered were easily accessible (Padlee & Reimers, 2015). This, therefore, implies that remain competitive, universities should endeavour to satisfy their students, however diverse their backgrounds, needs, expectations, aspirations, and goals.

## **6.7. Summary of Findings**

In order of importance (see Table 6.1) the MAK international students prioritized, academic life (class), accommodation (housing and transport), personal life (feelings) and social life (friendship) respectively; while the KIU international students (see Table 6.2) in order of significance listed accommodation (housing and transport), academic life (class), personal life (feelings) and then social life (friendship). The admission application process was described as easy and presented few challenges. In some cases, a third party applied on behalf of the student. It is important to note

that a few of the students did report they had encountered some challenges. It was found that the admission application process at KIU was experienced as easier than that at MAK. The study established that the international students experienced the teaching and learning approach applied at both MAK and KIU as new and quite different from the classroom and learning styles in the home country. A few of the students expressed the opinion that the teaching style was teacher centred and posed less of a challenge to students during the learning process. Thus, while the majority of the students appeared to be satisfied with the teaching and learning style, a few had registered their dissatisfaction. In respect of the student-faculty relationship, overall it was recognised as cordial and supportive although some instances of uncooperative faculty members were identified but attributed to their personalities. Regarding academic load and demand, students felt that met their expectation, is specific and not too demanding as compared to the home country lived academic experience. In regard to the impact of studying in Uganda, on a self-rated basis, the students revealed that they gained professional competence in their respective disciplines of study.

In relation to improving the services offered to international students, strategies identified included the provision of accommodation, opening up of channels of communication between the students and university management, harmonize tuition fees paid by national and international students, and help students to obtain travel documents from the immigration department. In respect to their unwillingness to recommend the university to others, majority of the students indicated they would, some had reservation and minority boldly stated they would not recommend to anyone else based on their lived experiences. In addition, a number of strategies to attract more international students to enrol were recommended, for example, update the website with correct information, revisit the tuition fees, rebuild the public image of MAK which had been tarnished by the recurrent strikes, treat existing international students well, improve infrastructure and equipment, make all courses practical and provide accommodation. Furthermore, changes that should happen were identified as initiate and complete the accreditation processes for all courses by NCHE, change current administration and policies that are unpopular with the students, overhaul the current system of managing results, and involve the students' voice in decision-making.

The next chapter, Chapter seven presents the findings and discussion on the socioeconomic and personal issues, accommodation, transport and strikes which were also combined as the

socioeconomic experiences. The intention behind this separation of experiences was to make clear the voices of diverse international students in respect of their academic and socioeconomic experiences within the context of the institutions at which they had enrolled for the ultimate use of all university staff members (Heng, 2017).

## Chapter Seven

### Lived Socioeconomic Experiences of International Students in Uganda

#### 7.1. Introduction

In providing a conceptual understanding of international experiences, Van Manen (1997, 2002, cited in Rich, Graham, Taket, & Shelley, 2013) proposed four dimensions of the lived experiences of international students as involving lived body, lived time, lived space and lived human relations. In addition, these dimensions, while distinct in their contribution to such lived experiences, are infused with each other to form a person's actual experience. As the findings of this study demonstrated these dimensions may be said to be applicable to the international students' academic and socioeconomic lived experiences. In respect of the lived body, this implies our physical presence in the immediate surrounding and, in the context of this study, an international student's presence in the university and place of residence, and how the body reacts and responds to stimuli from the surroundings such as threat, uncertainty, emotion and sickness, among other forces. In regard to lived time, this reflects one's subjective understanding of specific life encounters within a given period, for example, during the study abroad period. In respect to the international students, this involves lived events such as lived events during the application for admission, processing of travel document and actual travel, settling-in period on arrival in a destination country (accommodation, registration), classroom engagement (faculty–student relationships, experience with management of coursework, tests, and examinations) and the clearing out and graduation processes.

Regarding the dimension of lived space, this relates to the psychological attitude one develops towards the immediate surrounding with feelings of safety, welcome and involvement in local community programmes all contributing to the accumulated experience about the place in question. In the case of the international students, the consideration of safety is assumed to guarantee their life and belongings, free movement and adventure in the destination country, hence a positive experience, while feelings of uncertainty, ambiguity in the host country, threats, arrest, attacks, discrimination and racism result in withdrawal from the activities in the immediate surrounding and, hence, a negative experience is acquired. In line with the preceding discussion, Kell and Vogl (2008) argue that the physical presence of the international students, coupled with differences in appearance and language, may trigger local xenophobic and racist activities which

place the international students' lives and property at risk. On this debate, Sherry et al. (2010) assert that international students constitute a vulnerable group who often face unique challenges in a foreign country.

Lastly, in respect to the dimension of lived human relations, the focus is the context of this study was on the social networks developed, nurtured and applied during the study abroad period and which determine the level of communication, integration, and support accorded to the international students from within the immediate surroundings. Lived experiences relates to how we engage in and perceive situations based on our natural attitude as well as the application of a reflective mind and attitude towards the subsequent interactions. In light of this conceptual clarity, the international students' academic experiences was discussed in Chapter six while in this chapter, Chapter seven, the daily interactions and encounters with people in the immediate surrounding in respect to socioeconomic experiences are presented, analysed and discussed. The findings on academic experiences (Chapter six) and socioeconomic experiences (Chapter seven) presented in this study respond in part to the concern expressed by Kell and Vogl (2008, p. 21) that investigations into the experiences of international students tend to be looked at from the market perspective instead of focusing on the educational, social and cultural interactions. The aim of this study was to crystallise the diverse international students' voices within the context of both the higher education institution at which they had enrolled and their immediate socioeconomic surroundings. In specific terms, the focus of the presentation, analysis, and discussion in this chapter was friendship and time spending patterns, opinions about Ugandan students, personal life on and off campus; and accommodation and transport experiences. These are all discussed in the subsequent sections.

## **7.2. Friendship and Time Spending Patterns**

To a large extent the ability to settle in and live a relatively easy in a destination country depends on the international student's personality and ability to nurture, develop and use the networks formed in his/her daily life. Campbell et al. (2015, p. 239) reason that the development of friendship is a natural process which is informed by the interpersonal chemistry that generates a liking for each other on first time meeting and which affects how interaction develops thereafter. In addition, Kell and Vogl (2008) contend that friendships are critical in the international students are to have a firm foundation for living in a new country, while Hendrickson et al. (2010, p. 2) posit that friendship is essential if individuals are to meet their social and emotional needs.

However, Wen, Hu and Hao (2017, p. 4) contend that new evidence has emerged that points to the cultural norms, language barriers and friendship structures in a destination country as factors that may curtail the international students' capacity to nurture and develop relationships, thus leading to feelings of isolation and loneliness. Moreover, Jæger and Gram (2017, p. 37) contend that, after admission and registration, it is incumbent upon the university to settle international students' if they are to experience immediate satisfaction and enjoy the long-term benefits of the study experience. This view is in agreement with Sawir's (2013) assertion that, with the registration of students, the university enters into a social contract to ensure the students' social and academic life are integrated into the systems. Indeed Sawir et al. (2008, p. 151) pointed out that it is incumbent on universities to provide satisfactory support to international students to ensure they are able to make the necessary academic and social adjustments as findings in the table below and narrative that follows illuminates.

**Table 7. 2: A comparative analysis of friendship pattern of international students at MIK and KIU**

Country	MAK			KIU		
	First Choice and in %	Second Choice and in %	Third Choice and in %	First Choice and in %	Second Choice and in %	Third Choice and in %
Uganda	7 (46.6)	5 (33.3)	3 (20.0)	7 (53.8)	2 (15.4)	2 (15.4)
Nigerian	0 (0.0)	0(0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (7.7)	1 (7.7)	3 (23.1)
Kenya	3 (20)	1 (6.7)	0 (0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0(0.0)
Tanzania	2 (13.3)	2 (13.3)	0(0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
South Sudan	1 (6.7)	0(0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (7.7)	0 (0.0)
Rwanda	1 (6.7)	0(0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (7.7)	0 (0.0)
Somalia	1 (6.7)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (7.7)	1 (7.7)	0 (0.0)
Burundian	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (6.7)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Ethiopia	0 (0.0)	1 (6.7)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Zambian	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (7.7)	0 (0.0)
DRC-Congo	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	1(7.7)
Int. Students	0(0.0)	6(40.0)	9(60.0)	3(23.1)	4(30.7)	5(38.4)
N/A	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	2(13.3)	1(7.7)	2(15.4)	2(15.4)
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>13</b>

**Source:** MAK and KIU analysed interview data 2017.

It is important to note that, in the analysis about, first choice refers to local/domestic students (Ugandans), second choice refers to nationals (from home country) and third choice refers to fellow international students (students from other countries). The analysis of the students' responses presented in Table 7.1. revealed that that, as compared to interacting and forming friendships with students other than Ugandan students, the international students interacted and formed more friendships with Ugandans as indicated as priority no.1 friends with seven (46.6%) of the 15 respondents choosing this option. The findings also indicated that five (33.3%) of respondents preferred to make friends with their fellow countrymen as their second preference while three (20%) indicated friendships with international students as their third priority on the ranking of friendship. It is interesting to note that not one of the respondent cited an international student as a friend under priority number 1 although a significant number of the respondents (9 (60%)) placed their friendships with fellow international students as priority no. 3. A similar pattern was observed for KIU with seven of the 13 respondents indicating that they preferred to make friends with Ugandan students rather than with the nationals and internationals. However, different to the MAK findings, three out of the 13 respondents registered friendships with fellow international students as a priority. The greater preference for friendships with international students was recorded at KIU and not at MAK may be explained by the large numbers of international students at KIU and, thus, a wider catchment area for international friends. The study established that there were limited friendship networks amongst the international students at MAK and KIU who participated in the study. This difference in friendship amongst international students at MAK may be explained by the existing context, the extent of the supportive environment provided by the universities and the level of integration into the immediate community in which the students lived. This finding echoes earlier findings by Rosenthal, Russell and Thomson (2007, p. 73) that found limited friendship linkages among and between international students in an Australian University occasioned by difference in their cultural background. This same reason of difference in cultural background may explain why international students indicated as third other international students as their preferred friends. However, Hendrickson (2018:1) found more friendship network between home-country and other international students in their early stage of stay in the new country, but over time due to engagement with the university programs more friendship linkages were developed with the host country students. In light of this literature source, interview responses that speak to the findings of this study in respect to friendship patterns



highlighted specific experiences and reasons for the choices made. Asked why they spent more time with Ugandan students, the students responded as follows:

*... It's because of their hospitality. They are really welcoming, they are easy to make friends with as they are open to whatever. They are ready to share with you so that one also makes you feel that I can have time to spend in this hostel [MAK2 – Kenyan].*

*... my ability to speak Luganda made it easy for me to engage with them at close proximity, then from the religious perspective, I am saved and the of international students are freelancing with life so I tend to find it easy to associate with Ugandans who are also saved; and their reserved and hospitable nature [MAK4 – Kenyan].*

*I feel comfortable with Ugandans because I am used to their culture and lives and, so, that's why I find it easier to interact with them [MAK13 – South Sudanese].*

*I deal with many Ugandans and, because of the way they live and socialise, it is easier to befriend them ... the way they live is not too different from my people and the way they communicate with us, it's like we are from the same part [KIU 9 – Rwandese].*

These quotations agree with the assertions of Wen et al. (2017, p. 4) and Sawir, Marginson, Forbes-Mewett, Nyland, and Ramia (2012) that international students whose home cultural orientation is in line with that of the host country culture tend to find it easier to make friends with their counterparts from the host country as opposed to those whose home cultural orientation differs from that of the host country. Further findings illuminated that the international students' social connection with Ugandan students was not in order to satisfy social and emotional needs but also because of the instrumental academic support they attained and professional goals they met with these connections (Hendrickson et al., 2010; Hendrickson, 2018). The following responses spoke to this reality: “... the reason why I came here was to study so, most of the time, we are reading and discussing so, in most of these things, I have to do with my classmates who are mostly Ugandans” [KIU11 – Somali] and “I spend more time with Ugandans because I came here for academic purposes... I did a BSc in Geography and left high school and then did not study for 10 years so I missed some mathematical things for a long time so I have to be with them so that I can remember ...” [KIU4-Nigerian].

I would argue that the English language, as a strategic need for an international student from a non-English speaking country, informed the need to engage in friendship with Ugandan students. This claim was supported by the following interview responses: “... mostly I like to learn English

*from them*” [KIU5 – DRC Congo; MAK9 – Tanzanian], “... *my reason for coming to Uganda was first of all English*” [KIU9 – Rwandese] and “*English is part of my objective for coming here because Uganda is an English-speaking country*”. Informed by these responses I would argue that, as rational beings with a desire to achieve the goal of learning or improving their, the international students had identified the Ugandan students’ English language capacity and chose to associate closely with them so as to benefit from this capacity. The integrated and strategic nature of the international students’ connectedness with Ugandan students was vividly illustrated in the following comment:

*Socially I do have less time with Ugandans and that is how it has been and I have found it comfortable. However, when it comes to the professional aspect, maybe making films, the circle I work with is mostly comprised of Ugandans. So, you may say Ugandans form the cream of my professional work* [MAK7 – Kenyan].

Although the quotations provide evidence of both academic and professional gains, the study also found reservations in respect of forming friendships with Ugandans and spending time with them. For example, it was revealed:

*...I don’t like their ideology sometimes. Like most of them are not very aggressive in what they do, they are not chap chap [Swahili slung for being fast], there is lack of zeal. They are the ones to sit and see things done compared to where I come from – the guys are very fast, if you delay you don’t get it. And that’s the thing, most of them don’t do but the few who do know about it, we really slide on together* [MAK5 – Kenyan].

*There is a way, Ugandans ... we don’t, like, welcome each other. Anyway, there is a way they also think of us. We [international students] also think like these guys ... and you can’t welcome everyone* [MAK8 – Tanzanian].

The quotations above appear to highlight the inherent cultural and value system that inform the way in which international students conceptualise and project the outlook of the other. The last quotation seemingly indicates that Ugandans are considered as slow or lazy in their approach to life with this conceptual view appearing to have informed the decision as whether or not to make friendship with the Ugandans students. Similarly, implied is the view that the Ugandan students underrate or demean international students, demonstrating an assumed superior mentality in respect of the other students. However, it may also be said that the quotation illustrates an inner bias on the part of the international students towards the Ugandan students, although this was not

discernible in this study. The study found that international students did not consider students from other countries as the most immediate people with whom to form friendships as was illustrated by their third position in the ranking for MAK and KIU respectively – see Tables: 7.1. As the following quotations indicate various reasons were given for the limited interaction among international students. One respondent stated: “... *we see the internationals but what can bring us together is not there*” [MAK6 – Kenyan]. This quote seem to suggest that there are no major issues of interest that international students can offer to attract a sustained interaction with them student from other countries . Another declaration of reservation in friendship was that “... *it becomes a bit challenging to easily become friends with them because there is fear that they may not like you* [KIU9 – Rwandese]. This finding lends support to the study conducted by Harrison (2011, p. 2) that established that interaction between national and international students tends to be limited due to the anxiety arising from language limitations. It was also revealed that “... *international students do not have an interest in others. They feel, like, isolated sometimes and stay in their hostel ...they don't like interacting with others due to many factors...*” [MAK15 – Somali]. This revelation seems to suggest that international students felt that they had less to offer in a friendship with this possibly explaining the limited interaction between them. This claim lends support to the assertion of Campbell, Holderness, and Riggs (2015) that people engage in friendships with the intention of satisfying a need or gain a fulfilling result based on a cost-benefit assessment of the interaction. In essence, a fulfilling relationship is one where the benefits supersede the cost of engagement. As exemplified in the varied interview quotes, the finding that the international students in this study related less was in agreement with the findings of Rienties and Nolan (2014) but contrary to Koehne’s (2005) finding that demonstrated that international students tend to have more social networks among themselves than with other students. It is important to note that, although support for one another was not obvious, the revelations made did point to the international students’ friendships with one another as providing both financial and instrumental support. For example, a respondent revealed: “*most of the time when I find myself with a problem that needs immediate help and support, the Kenyans will be available ... they chip in immediately to support me so that's why I put them as my first choice of friends*” [MAK6 – Kenyan]. Another added:

... *sometimes I am broke and I need some assistance and I have discovered that most people who have actually turned out to be helpful are other people from other countries* [KIU13 – Zambian].

In addition, the study established specific consideration that informed the international students' friendship networks with co-nationals with whom they tended to spend much of their time. The following statements provided evidence of this finding: "... sometimes you need someone to speak to in your language and talk about things back home ... we stay in the same place and there are so many courses that we do together... [KIU11 – Somali], "... we live in the same compound, play together, and share some foodstuff and ideas. Where I rent my house there are almost only Nigerians there [KIU8 – Nigerian] and "they understand me when I talk" [KIU7 – Nigerian]. A sense of security and psychological comfort appeared to play a critical factor in the co-national friendship network as was exemplified in the following quotations: "we come from the same place and, when we are together, we feel safe, understand each other and, with them, I feel I am myself" [MAK7-Kenyan] and "we come from the same country and I just find myself spending more time with them because, when I go home, they are there, I come to campus, they are there" [MAK8 - Tanzanian]. These quotations highlight the strong need for a sense of belonging in familiar company as a consideration that informed the international students' co-national friendship network and as a means to adjust to new life (Rienties & Nolan, 2014). This is in agreement with Wen et al. (2017) who found that Japanese and Korean international students formed friendship among themselves rather than with the Chinese national students because of their need for a sense of belonging with a familiar group of people. However, the finding of Wen et al (2017) contradicts literature that indicates that international students whose cultural orientation is similar to that in the host country tend to find it easier to form friendships (Sawir et al. 2012). Informed by the findings and the relevant literature, it seems evident that international students form friendship networks based on their expectations that will benefit from such relationships. This implies that, when they observe that a friendship relationship may offer few benefits, such engagements are terminated. Thus, it would seem that the international students did not form friendships just for the sake of it but that such friendships were nurtured and developed in the expectation of achieving a certain purpose. I would argue that international students limit their friendship networks if they feel that the other parties are not able to make a positive contribution to their academic and social lives as they expected. In view of this, eliciting the international students' opinions of the Ugandan students was paramount to obtaining an indication of how their views may have contributed to their academic and social experiences while in Uganda. This issue is discussed in the next section.

### 7.3. International Students' Opinions of Ugandan Students

The international students' friendship experiences, as discussed in the preceding section 7.1, revealed the dynamics of engagement but did not reveal opinions that translated into decisions about the students with whom they would relate. I maintain that a student's opinion of people and place serves acts as a predictor of the nature, frequency and possible value expected from a friendship network. Accordingly, gaining an understanding of the students' opinions was deemed to be of strategic importance for higher education institutions in their designing of programmes and approaches aimed at supporting integration processes. In essence, students' opinions provide a form of feedback to an institution through which it may access information on the strengths and weaknesses identified and then use such information to design interventions aimed at effecting the improvement of the learning environment (Mubuuke, Louw, & Van Schalkwyk, 2016). In this case the information provided pertained to the Ugandan students as conceived through the international students' lens. It is important to note that the differences in the conceptualisations of the national and international students would, inevitably, results in disagreements in respect of the integration themes which needed to be improved (Koehne, 2005).

The study sought the international students' opinion on the Ugandan students with whom they interacted in their academic programmes with diverse opinion based on their lived experiences being registered. In the main the study found that the international students expressed positive opinions about the Ugandan students although a few did express mixed opinions about the Ugandan students. During the interviews integrated opinions that touched on both the academic and social lives of the Ugandan students were expressed. In relation to the academic aspect, the international students stated that Ugandan students, for example, the Ugandan students *“are very good, they are very serious, they read all the time from the beginning of the semester to the end and they are socially good, they communicate, I am okay with them”* [KIU2 – Nigerian]; *“They are good, interactive and can share ... and when you approach them with a problem and ask to be assisted, they help out”* [MAK14 – Cameroonian] and *“they are friendly and even better than us [Burundians], they beat us in being nice ... most Ugandans ... want to know more about us ... They try to find out what that different thing that you have that they don't have. They have an interest”* [MAK3 – Burundian]. This last quotation is in line with the finding of Linnenbrink-Garcia et al. (2010, p. 3) that, when a student has a positive feeling about and an interest in a specific discipline, this arouses an inner desire to further investigate it and which may the earlier

opinion of Ugandan students “... *they read all the time from the beginning of the semester to the end ...*” [KIU2 – Nigerian].

The opinions expressed in the interviews highlighted that the desire to achieve an academic goal or profession is an important factor in setting an individual’s future direction to become a new self (Koehne, 2005). It is also important to note that realising a new self requires strategic shifts in thinking, friendship networks, prioritisation, time utilisation and the setting of goals which are not necessarily easy to achieve but, nevertheless, it is essential to aim at a more challenging and achievable target. Kerr, Tweedy, J., Edwards, and Kimmel (2017) advise on the need to set goals that help to achieve aspirational realism and which implies setting targets which appear to be unachievable but which, if within available capacity, are possible to attain. I would argue that having an interest is a drive to or a predictor of any successful engagement. In the academic field, a loss of interest is usually reflected in the abandonment of a course of study. Similarly, showing an interest in other people creates a high probability of establishing a wider social network for oneself and living a life that is fulfilling – an indicator of acceptability in the community and conceptualised as host receptivity (Hendrickson, 20183). The following quotations illustrate such receptivity:

*Ugandan student are the best people whom I have met in my life as a student because, when you are with them, you do not feel that you come from somewhere else and you do not feel that you do not belong to this country, you will not feel that you are different from them actually* [KIU11 – Somali].

Similarly stated was:

*... in terms of behaviour, Ugandans are humble. It is very hard to find a Ugandan who is not ready to answer you, especially the students whom we talk with ... I have never seen a student who is not ready to answer you or interact with you, who does not want to talk to anyone* [KIU6 – South Sudan]

It is clear from these quotations, which were based on lived experiences, that the majority of the international students had developed a feeling of belonging in Uganda. In addition, the quotations provided evidence of the ability of the international students to personally identify with and relate to the Ugandan students and to feel accepted, respected and helped out whenever the need arose. In addition, their acceptance within a learning community indicated that the international students were exhibiting behaviours that demonstrated their adaptation to group dynamics, for example,

adherence to the norms set for all the group members, undertaking group tasks, reporting to the group, helping out in the group and respect for one another, regardless any categorisation, among others.

In line with the the preceding discussion, the study conducted by Curtin, Stewart, and Ostrove (2013) on doctoral students in the US established that the students' perceived sense of belonging provided by the academic advisors was instrumental in their completing their courses timeously. Hughes (2010) suggested that, when students, as individuals, feel a sense of belonging in a learning environment, they tend to personal engagements with their fellow students and enjoy the learning processes while, on the other hand, not belonging to a learning group elicits feelings of isolation, loss of interest and eventual exit from the course. I would, therefore, posit that the quotations cited above, which provide evidence of positive opinions on the part of the international students, illustrate a reasonably well-integrated international student community in Uganda.

However, based on the international students' lived experiences, some of the respondents did express mixed opinions about the Ugandan students. Some of the opinions were specific to the individual and should not be read as applicable to all students. The findings illustrated the international students' ability to apply, synthesise and evaluate their experiences and make deductions about the Ugandan students. A possible explanation for the mixed opinions expressed may be that the international students may have had both good and bad experiences with the resultant significant emotional, physical or financial impacts. This may have resulted in difficulties in discerning which of the two experiences had been the more adverse. The following quotation attests to such mixed feelings:

*...I would say Ugandan students ... are in two different perspectives. First, in academics, definitely they are much more hardworking than I am used to; secondly, socially they are a slightly receptive in a way, like, if you are someone who really likes socialising, it will be a little bit easier for you to adapt here but then, if you are a little bit reserved or a little bit quiet, it's much harder to adapt to them [MAK12 – Rwandese].*

The quotation also reveals the contribution of one's personality in the development of a friendship. On this aspect, Harrison (2012) opined that ethnocentrism, conceptualised as one's preference to interact with people of a known culture, explains one's opinions about and attitude towards persons from other cultures and the probability of developing a friendship with them. This. Suggests that students with pleasant and outgoing traits tend to seek new experiences, are less conservative in

their thinking and want to receive others into their social network while the reverse also holds true. It is, thus, apparent that one's opinion and choices determine the breadth and depth of the social networks established. In respect of the international students' opinions about Ugandan students, the following comments were made:

*... at some point, because I don't know much Luganda [a commonly spoken local language in Central Uganda] but understand something, I felt bad when they spoke in Luganda, abusing me. Once in a while that kind of thing makes me feel bad about Ugandans. Some of them are a little selfish ... They are honest, they say what they feel, they are friendly and welcoming. Academically I think they are good because some of them are on government sponsorships because they scored very highly in A' levels. Although practically not so good, theoretically they are good [MAK11 – Ethiopian].*

*...Ugandan students are good and the problem ... some of them are committed and want to work hard and but some don't want to put themselves under pressure. In terms of class engagement, I think they really engage and the challenge they have, sometimes they take what is happening as the best choice [KIU14 – DRC-Congolese].*

The quotation illustrates the mixed opinions which some of the international students had in respect of Ugandan students. It is also in line with Harrison's (2012, p. 233) earlier finding that the diverse and pronounced views which international students hold about national students were established in earlier studies conducted on intercultural relations. In view of the fact that opinion registered is informational feedback (Mubuuke et al., 2016), the quotations highlighted concerns that pointed to areas that required immediate attention by the university if the international students are to experience a positive learning environment. This illuminates the need for the university to adopt and design more practical courses rather than just teaching theoretical skills. Similarly implied is the need to design a student-wide counselling program to ensure collective responsibility by abandoning the use of discriminatory and abusive language in order to help the international students to feel more comfortable and also to encourage the students to question knowledge and not just to accept what they hear in the lecture sessions.

#### **7.4. Role of University in Friendship Formation**

Rienties and Nolan (2014) assert that institutions have a role to play in fostering the international students' social integration into and adjustment in the destination country. It has been observed that there is lack of intercultural competence at the institutional level and, therefore, the successful



implementation of an internationalisation strategy would require staff members with the appropriate abilities and competences. Leask (2009) posits that it would require the involvement of a number of people in the university to improve the social connections between the national and international student. When asked to give their opinions about what MAK and KIU could do to help international students make friend, the respondents gave various answers which reflected their lived experiences. One striking idea emerged from the following response in which it was suggested that: *“The first thing probably the university could do is to form an international students’ organisation ... it would be much easier then for all the international students to cooperate and also tell each other stories on how to succeed in the environment and also how to adapt”* [MAK12 – Rwandese]. In addition, it was stated that “ ... *“Organise events and debates which mix different people ... when people talk together they easily become friends .. really, the university tries but they are not as many as we require”* [KIU9 – Rwandese], *“put in place some tournaments, activities and competitive events involving Ugandan and international students who would come together, share, interact, exchange knowledge and culture with each other and organise some dinners after the events”* [MAK15 – Somali]. A similar view with an academic orientation was shared: *“... put us under academic pressure to stay together for us to discuss”* [KIU10 – Somali]. Implied in these quotations is the fact that both classroom and out of class learning activities offer students an intentional avenue for regular interaction through which friendships may start, grow and mature (Kerr et al., 2017). This view supports Hendrickson’s (2018) finding in the study conducted in Brazil that, over time, participation in the university designed curriculum, classroom engagement, extra-curricular activities, fieldwork excursions, adventure trips and residing in university halls of residence, result in international students developing strong friendship networks with the national students. Further highlighted was that participation in the programmes moved the friendship network patterns involving co-nationals and between international students during the early stages of their stay on campus to more friendship networks with national students.

The preceding discussion also accords with the view that the learning context determines the way in which students interact with the university curriculum. Considering that friendship networks don not form only during learning in a class environment , the role of extra-curricular activities specifically sport and cultural gala respondents suggested:

*... the university should take the lead in organising sports events for both male and female students and cultural galas but not student associations to organise the cultural gala. The events should be widely advertised and an awareness created to mobilise students to attend and learn from the different cultures and exchange ideas. I have a feeling guys will come, know and learn from each other [MAK1 – Kenyan].*

*...I think they should advise international students to feel free to associate with other students because you find cases where some sections of students have groups and they move within those groups and they don't kind of associate with others ... I think the university should encourage some association with other students [MAK2 – Kenyan].*

This view is supported by Minocha et al. (2018) in their assertion that, when an institution encourages interaction, this cultivates the ground for deeper integration and the attainment of diversity competences. The quotations provide evidence of the international students' recognition of the centrality of a university in settling the students they admit in line with its legal, moral and ethical mandate. This suggests that universities ought to design programmes which are intended to facilitate social integration and the attainment of inter-cultural skills among both international and national students. However, it would seem that this view is not carried out in practice as it would appear that the universities offer limited support for integration despite the fact that Sawir et al. (2008) did point out that universities do offer satisfactory support to international students in relation to their academic and social adjustment. Moreover, Jæger and Gram (2017) contend that, after admission and registration, it is incumbent upon the university to take responsibility for the international students' settling in to ensure they attain immediate satisfaction but also, ultimately, that they are also ensured of the long-term benefits of the study experience. This view is in agreement with Sawir's (2013) assertion that, upon registration of students, the university enters into a social contract to ensure the students' social and academic integration into the systems. However, Leask (2009) cautions that, even when the university designs activities and strategies aimed at promoting interaction, the student may still not meaningfully engage in the programme activities within the diverse cultures in the class. I would, therefore, argue that the programmes the university develops ought to be participative and inclusive of the international students to achieve their buy in during the implementation and attendant evaluation processes. The academic life experience at the campus is informed by the academic programmes incorporated in the curriculum and it is through their interaction with the learning processes that the international students are engaged within the locus of the influence of the university.

## **7.5. Personal Life Treatment**

In view of the fact that academic engagement involves and takes place within a human environment, it was deemed important for this study to investigate the international students' social experience within the university and outside of the campus. It is posited that the existing social and cultural settings in communities pose a challenge to the international students' adaptation efforts and that this forms the experiences shared in academic research such as this study. In presenting the findings and discussion attention was paid to the stories about the spectrum of challenges which the international students faced, including concerns about perceptions, unfairness, discrimination, actions that caused emotional distress and mistreatment – all conceptualised as disrespectful treatment.

### **7.5.1. Disrespectful Treatment at the Campus**

An environment which is characterised by perceptions of discrimination against international students by the university staff and the community in which they live may be termed a hostile environment. A hostile environment exhibits three characteristics, namely: a feeling of discomfort, verbal insults and direct confrontation (Lee & Rice, 2007). For the purposes of this study this conceptualisation informed the understanding of disrespectful treatment as involving different dimensions of disrespectful treatment. The following quotation spoke vividly to such this disrespectful treatment as described in the scenario encountered:

*..I was told by friends that I have to get a new library card but I still had the old one. When I entered the library the security guard there told me that I should change that library card before the deadline. I asked her 'When is the deadline?' she just looked at me as if I was a no one ... she just left me there [KIU2 – Nigerian].*

This quotation illuminates a biased attitude on the part of the staff member to whom the student had spoken and the subsequent anguished experience. The act of ignoring the student and walking away constituted an act of operational aggression. Sue (2005), cited in Tedam (2014), referred to this as micro aggression in which non-verbal cues are applied to ignore and look down upon a service benefactor. The behaviour described in the quotation was an indication of a failure to understand and respect diversity at the university. This experience supports Lee and Rice's (2007) finding that international students often experience difficulties in their interactions with non-academic staff members. Although he had never experienced disrespectful treatment, a Kenyan respondent shared his friend's experience of open discrimination based on nationality as follows:

*...Actually I have heard quite a number of students complaining that, when it comes to the examination period and you have not paid your fees in full ... there is a place where they go to negotiate; but foreigners are not listened to yet Ugandans negotiate even when they have a balance of five million Ugandan Shillings and have not paid for that exam. A foreigner who has a fees balance of \$100 is required to pay it in full [KIU12 – Kenyan].*

This quotation provides evidence of an institutionally designed discriminatory approach to fee defaulters. However, in terms of application for Ugandan students who default to pay fees, they are given an opportunity to plead which is not granted to international students which in itself is discriminatory. Similar experiences involving discriminatory treatment of a friend were shared by both a Zambian and a Kenyan respondent:

*... they had arranged a trip ... this guy came late when the bus had already started off ... he was running after the bus but these people were on the window laughing at him, even waving at him. No one bothered to stop the bus. The guy felt really bad [KIU13 – Zambian].*

*I have Sudanese friends who have complained about unfair treatment by the non-teaching staff ... because they were kind of segregated because, at that time, there were wars so guys would talk, abused them, like 'Go back to your country, why are you here, you are IDPs, you are refugees' and it was not good for them [MAK5 – Kenyan].*

This finding echoes the finding of Lee and Rice (2007) that making a demeaning statement about an international student's country of origin may result in the student from attending classes. An Ethiopian respondent shared the following about a friend's experience:

*...I have a friend from Sudan, he has more challenges with speaking English and understanding what the lecturer says in English ... and he also does not feel so confident in presenting because people make fun of him and his accent, and they make fun of mine as well, so he misses presentations because of that [MAK11 – Ethiopian].*

The findings clearly indicate that there is apparent discrimination based on nationality and also an unsupportive class environment that destroys the confidence of international students who are not fluent in English. Missing classes due to language challenges, as described in the quotation, and observed by the student, was clearly the result of feeling uncomfortable (Lee & Rice, 2007). Although the student had not been physically excluded from the class the student felt psychologically uncomfortable in class. Moreover, the impact of such a discriminative act elicits a feeling of hopelessness and helplessness which affects the learning processes. This supports Leask's (2009) assertion that the creation of a supportive learning environment requires the involvement of a number of people in the university who possess the appropriate intercultural

competence, attitude, and exposure – something which is apparently lacking in the universities. However, it is assumed that the international students find ways of coping with the stressful moments they encounter, they accept the discomfort they face in the alien community, they become assimilated into the community and they live a normal life. While students require adequate support from the university, universities claim to provide the necessary support impartially regardless of nationality and do not see its weakness in respect to care they offer to international students. (Lee & Rice, 2007).

I hold the view that universities should take interest in and establish a mechanism by which to listen to, monitor and attend to the complaints made by international students in a structured manner although it appeared, at the time of the study, it seemed as if there was no such mechanism in place. In addition, appropriate channels of communication need to be put in place and applied in any matter that affects the international students' life, be it on or off campus. However, it must also be remembered that creating a supportive learning environment is not the domain of the university only as a multiplicity of actors is involved. On this point, Galanes and Carmack (2013) observed that a learning environment comprises classroom, halls of residence, regardless of whether the university is privately owned or not, the student guild and casual functions through which student-student and student-faculty/administration relate. It is posited that any one of these actors, in his/her line of duty and locus of influence in the learning environment, who interacts with international students may perpetuate or suppress the occurrence of disrespectful treatment at any point. I further submit that it is incumbent on the university, in terms of its mandate, to avert such occurrences by instituting policies and mechanisms in respect of receiving and addressing complaints and imposing harsh penalties on the perpetrators of such incidents. Minocha, Shiel and Hristov (2018) emphatically state that, in the interests of internationalisation, it is vital that higher education institutions change their current policies and practices while Gallop and Bastien (2016) adds that strategies intended to domesticate internationalisation must be incorporated in the institutional plans and the existing structure to provide appropriate support. While such policies may avert disrespectful treatment on campus, a similar approach could be designed by government to manage such treatment of campus and prevent experiences like those discussed below.

### 7.5.2. Disrespectful Treatment off Campus

Any discussion on the international students' life experiences in a destination country would be incomplete without a focus on life off campus where they interact with the local people, transport system, recreation facilities and the government structures and machinery. It was deemed important for the purposes of this study to investigate the international students' social life experiences off the campus to gain an understanding of their all-around experience within the Ugandan context. Applying Lee and Rice (2007) conceptualisation of a hostile environment which is characterised by disrespectful treatment which causes the recipients of such treatment to experience feelings of discomfort, verbal insults and direct confrontation, the study sought the international students' lived experiences. Diverse and disturbing narratives emerged from the interviews. The disrespectful treatment meted out to the international students on the streets and in the market reflected no respect for either their privacy or their right to speak their own languages. It was revealed:

*... on the streets, you are walking and not talking to anyone but you are just jazzing with your friend or sister and they hear you speaking Swahili, they abuse you and use some other words. In the market ... they pull your hands and, sometimes...end up touching your private parts. Like you are walking and someone is touching you, you have refused to buy, someone abuses you and just beats your bum ... and whenever I think of going to the market, oohh, I feel like remaining home [MAK8 – Tanzanian].*

*...we cannot speak the local language and when purchasing a commodity, instead of paying for the value of it, you pay 2-3 times the cost. Because we use English they get to know that you are a foreigner [KIU12 – Kenyan; KIU4 – Nigerian].*

An experience that demonstrated the intricacies of the international students' manoeuvring through life in a community characterised by vice and the government agencies' use of authority was described as follows:

*One of my friends caught a thief in the house and they took him to the police station. Actually the police changed from speaking in English, the official language, to speaking Luganda, a local non-official language. They talked with the thief, they told my friend that they had beaten the thief yet they had not ... they arrested my friend and put him in the cell and we had to bail him for a lot of money, so, if you are a foreigner in this country actually they normally ignore your complaint [KIU8 – Nigerian].*

The shed light on the discrimination based on nationality and the unfair treatment perpetuated by both the state agents and private business people motivated by the profit motive instead of serving

the interests of the international students. This excerpts above further suggest that the agents of government regard the international students with contempt while some sections of the community view them as a source of easy money. In addition, it was apparent that the international students were taken advantage of due to the language barrier. Sawir et al. (2012, p. 435) found that language ability was a key factor in the security of the international students in all circumstances of academic and social life. A further quotation that took on a national dimension illustrated the reactionary approach of the community which carried out violent attacks on the international student. This experience was described as follows:

*The first day I was here I was beaten. Just because that was the time when the South Sudan Interior Ministry had announced that foreigners were not allowed to ride bodaboda. So, because of that we were just attacked ... saying these are South Sudanese who have chased our people from South Sudan ... We were two in number and I do not know how we were saved but we were seriously beaten by them [KIU6 – South Sudan].*

A critical look at the quotations reveals that the disrespectful treatment of international students are not confined to one locus but occurs in various aspects of life. It is clear from the experiences shared that the international students are hurt by what they go through in an intimidating environment. As seen from the excerpts, experiences of disrespectful treatment and anger takes place in the streets and in the market and within organs of state. The reality is that these are the very service points upon which the international students must rely for their survival and they can't avoid to use the streets and go the market to get their daily supplies. In the situations described the international students' right to respect was undermined on account of their being foreign while they were made vulnerable, helpless and a victim of circumstances. Nevertheless, they had to find ways in which to disengage from the critical moments in the encounter. Based on the quotations it is argued that, in order to live in such difficult circumstances in an unfamiliar foreign environment, it is vital that the international students possess and apply high levels of emotional intelligence to manoeuvres through their everyday academic and social life encounters. On this note, Huerta, Goodson, Beigi, and Chlup (2017) affirm that, through the application of emotional intelligence, one is able to understand the feelings and emotions of oneself as well as those of adversaries during an encounter. Relating this conceptualization to the disrespectful treatment and experiences to which the international students were exposed off campus, I contend that judging from the experiences of disrespectful treatment shared in this study, the international students had demonstrated their ability to use their emotional intelligence, read situations, applied appropriate

common sense, and analysed the circumstance at hand and avoided head-on encounters with the aggressors in volatile situations in which they would lose most. I would further posit that the international students conducted a situational analysis through the application of risk assessment skills to determine their vulnerability and to take appropriate measures to manage their unfolding daily situations. Considering that international students live within the local community and its associated risks, a discussion on the international students' experiences with accommodation and transport system is presented in the next section.

### **7.5.3 International Students Experiences with Accommodation in Uganda**

Jæger and Gram (2017) and Partridge et al. (2014) are of the view that it is a moral obligation of governments and higher education institutions to provide a safe and enabling study environment for students to ensure they have a positive experience with the services offered. Identifying and being placed in a comfortable, safe and accessible housing facility is one service that the international students cited as a critical factor of their daily lives for it emerged as a factor that gave rise to significant discomfort due to the treatment they often receive from private accommodation providers (Bianchi, 2013). In the same vein international students expect to access university accommodation on their arrival in a destination country and at a higher education institution. Lee and Rice (2007) aver that higher education institutions should make efforts to provide for the immediate needs of international students upon their arrival in a destination country. One such a need is accommodation (Lloyd, 2003, cited in Lee & Rice 2007). In addition, the provision of university accommodation to international students is a service that would provide them with more opportunities to interact with national students than if they were in private accommodation. It was found that the international students' experiences with accommodation and transport in Uganda were somewhat diverse. It was deemed critical to investigate in order to hear the international students' voices as based on practical experience, to contribute to the existing literature on student accommodation and to acquire a broader understanding of their experiences in the Ugandan context. This was premised on the hope that the findings would guide the development of future national and university policy which will result in the provision of quality accommodation services in the future. The quotation below provides evidence of a lack of support from the university in helping international students to access accommodation services. For example, a respondent shared that:



*... most internationals don't stay in the university halls of residence because they are never offered a chance to apply. I came here but I never knew that there is a hall where international students may stay. They don't know that so they find themselves hustling in ... other places, but the university should advertise and open the place to internationals to find accommodation in the university halls because they are cheap and safer. So, I think that could be a key service the university could provide to international students [MAK1-Kenyan].*

Describing a lack of concern in situations of uncertainty caused by the strikes and the eventual closure of the university, a respondent stated:

*...some of the international student were chased out of their hostels because of the strike. ... The university has accommodation on the campus and they could have invited international students to converge at one hall of residence as the hostels were closed to protect us ... But they did not [MAK14 – Cameroonian].*

A similar experience was shared by a KIU respondents as follows:

*... whenever you say this is a university you are supposed to provide accommodation to ... students to protect their lives and property. You can't come from Nigeria, for example, to Uganda, and you find that the university has no hostel for male students ... you have to go off campus and look for a place in an environment and with security details you do not know [KIU3 – Nigerian].*

The experiences shared highlighted the lack of pastoral care by the university management at a time of desperate need. This was probably premised on the belief that the university had divested itself providing accommodation as a non-core function in which the university had limited competence and assumed that the international students, as adults, could find their way out of the situation. The respondents also shared their experiences which highlighted the community's high financial expectation of international students despite the fact that the international students' financial reality was far removed from the community expectation. A respondent attested to this claim as follows:

*... in most cases the outside world expects us to have money ... so, when it comes to renting houses they exaggerate the cost to us. They tend to do that unless you go into the hostels where the rental fee is known but, if you are green about renting, be certain you will experience an exaggerated cost [MAK4 – Kenyan].*

*... the setup was, like, there were other people there and when she was speaking other people started laughing and it was an awkward moment for me because I wasn't getting her and it was terrible. I had delayed paying rent ... This person really got upset, like she wanted to kick me out ... She said so to the point I got mad, I got upset ... I kept quiet but I felt really bad ... she is the kind of person who does not respect other people. She thinks, because we are foreigners, we are supposed to get the money and anytime she wants it we are supposed to pay, which is wrong [KIU13 – Zambian].*

The quotations above illustrate the international students' patience when they have to endure acts of humiliation and disrespect with the resultant frustration and anger they experience in the process. Nevertheless, it appeared that they had been able to manoeuvre through the difficult moments and ensure that their immediate service needs were met. However, it emerged that the international students sometimes react in self-defence when pushed beyond the limits, for example: *"The way I talked to her, she knew that, yes, this person knows his rights and what he needs. From there she stopped calling or quarrelling with me"* [KIU4 – Nigerian]. To this point the study found that the universities do not support international students in finding accommodation. In their study on international students at Monash University in Australia, Paltridge, Mayson, and Schapper (2010) established that securing accommodation in a university hall of residence provided more physical and social security to these students. This case study further revealed the important role played by private accommodation providers in meeting the housing and accommodation needs of international students. Given the prominent role which they play, and the vulnerability of these students who are at the mercy private housing providers, it is important that this private accommodation industry is regulated by a code of practice. Similarly, it would appear that, under the university arrangement, there are no channels of appeal in cases of unfair treatment or disagreement between the landlord and international student. Lee and Rice (2007) also found that international students experienced discrimination, verbal insults and negative comments in matters of accommodation and in the purchase of supplies while Waterfield and Whelan (2017) found that economic capital facilitates the international student's access to both good private accommodation and other services. However, it is only the international students from well to do families who are able to access good accommodation based on their financial capacity while the reverse holds true for the students from poor financial backgrounds.

Based on the findings, it is argued that the university's role in meeting the accommodation needs of international students' accommodation requirement is a matter of priority rather than a choice

because both academic and social integration are possible only if there is a secure, affordable and comfortable accommodation service provided. This view aligns with the finding of Hendrickson's (2018) study which considered university accommodation as an opportunity for contact with the other dimensions of service provided by the university such as engagement with classroom teaching and learning activities, extra-curricular activities and field excursions or adventure trips. Indeed, Paltridge et al. (2014) assert that it is essential that more is done by the universities to provide opportunities for national and international student interaction and that the university plays a critical role in providing university accommodation and a safe life near or on campus and thereby reducing the risks of students falling into the hand of unscrupulous private accommodation providers.

#### **7.5.4 International Students' Experiences with the Transport Facility and System in Uganda**

International students are particularly vulnerable to unforeseen circumstances caused by their unique characteristics in the destination country (Deng & Ritchie, 20185). One of the key areas of vulnerability is the use of public transport. This use of public means of transport is a common practice for most international students are not able to afford private means of transport. In addition, for one reason or the other they often have to use public transport during unsafe hours (Paltridge et al., 2010). The study found that the transport experiences of the international students were diverse and context specific. Soorenian (2013) established that disabled international students experienced diverse mobility challenges when living in university residences and when using escalators to access structures, taxis, buses and trains outside of the university. In respect to the transport facility and system in the destination country, the respondents cited experiences that were related to unethical practices, exploitation by transporters, taking advantage of the international student's limited knowledge about his/her destination, corruption and humiliation. The respondents had the following to say:

*... when you are a foreigner using a taxi, they charge you a different fare and when you give them any amount of money [emphasis bigger denomination] as the transport fare they can go with it, they can't give you back the change [KIU6 – South Sudan].*

*Some bodaboda men [licensed motorcycle riders], when you have agreed on a certain amount, on reaching your destination they change the agreed upon amount with claims that the destination was far ... [KIU7 – Nigerian].*

These quotations suggest that the international students are grossly exploited by the public transport providers with the agreed upon cost of transport not being respected. The international students cited a good transport system as one variable that would contribute to a positive and satisfying study abroad experience (Bianchi, 2013). In light of the negative experiences indicated in the finding indicate, it is posited that the government should design a better and efficient means of transport that is effectively monitored to guard against exploitation and to guarantee the international students reasonable security. In any case, as Partridge et al. (2010) observed, it is a moral obligation of government to provide a safe and enabling study environment for international students to ensure they have a positive experience in the destination country.

### **7.6. Strikes in MAK and their Effect on International Students**

Student strikes on the African continent have their roots in the struggle for independence against the colonial regimes (Kiboy, 2013). However, Kiboy (2013) notes further that the current trends of student strikes in Africa are in response to the increased financial burden placed on parents to meet the education costs of their children amidst the reduced state funding for education after governments adopted the structural adjustment reforms championed by the World Bank in the early 1990s. Uganda is no exception to this adoption of these structural reforms. In light of this reality, Makerere University, as a flagship university established in 1922, has experienced waves of strikes involving academic staff, non-academic staff and students. An analysis of the reasons for the strikes revealed a focus on welfare and remuneration, ideological activism and survival in the wave of the structural changes adopted by the university (MAK Visitation Report, 2017, p. 12). Johannesson and Kien Hong (2011) observed that student demonstrations and riots at MAK tend to have political undertones and militancy exemplified by the deployment of military police with AK 47 rifles in large numbers around the university during the 2001 and 2007 presidential elections in an attempt to suppress any chaos. In light of the assertion of Johannesson and Kien Hong (2017) in respect of the political overtone to university demonstrations, riots and strikes, Kasozi (2015) argued that it is not possible to understand students activism in isolation because the challenges faced by and at universities are intertwined and are a replica of everyday life in society. In view of this, a litany of strikes at MAK be traced back from the last strike that led to the closure of the university from 1 November 2016 and to 2 January 2017 (see Table.7.2 below):

#### **Table 7. 3: Chronology of strikes at Makerere University since pre-colonial times to 2016**

Year	Actor(s) involved	Reason for the strike/demonstration	Dimension
1952	Students	Boycott of the dining halls in a demand for better food	Welfare
1960	Students	Demonstrated against American bombing in northwestern Uganda and hanging of three African nationalists by the Smith Government in Rhodesia	Ideological /political
1976	Students	Linked to the ideological orientation that a change of government would possibly come alongside a change of policies and improved welfare	Ideological/ political
December 1990	Students	Rejection of a Guild Constitution imposed by the Ministry of Education – abolition of book allowance, transport and stationary	Survival
1991	Students	Government abolition of students’ allowances, yet students expected Government to give them free housing, food, stationery, and even pocket money and transport back home	Welfare
May 2005	Students	Apparent weaknesses in university management systems which did not prioritise student issues	Welfare
November 2006	Staff	Demand for government to fulfil pledge to increase salaries	Staff welfare
November 2007	Lecturers	Demand for better pay – university was closed for two months as lecturers refused to work and students turned rowdy over failure to study	Welfare
February 2008	Lecturers	Protest against the lack of adequate teaching materials – students did not join the strike this time	Academic
September 2011	Lecturers	Demand for increased pay and clearance of their pension arrears. University was closed barely two weeks into the new semester	Staff welfare
2013	Lecturers	Demand for a salary increment from Government	Staff welfare
July 2014	Students	Protest against management’s decision to scrap meals in the halls of residence and the 10% tuition increment policy for the new students	Welfare
October 2014	Students	Strike against an increase in graduation fees	Welfare and msurvival
April 2016	Students	Strike against scrapping of 32 courses	Survival
August 2016	Non-teaching staff	Strike lasted for three weeks. Demanding salary arrears. Government promised to pay but failed to do so	Staff welfare
November 2016	Lecturers and students	Lecturers on strike due to unpaid arrears and for students because of no lectures. On 1 <sup>st</sup> November 2016, university was closed by HE the President and Visitor and re-opened on 2/1/2017 after two months.	Survival and academic

*Source: Makarere University Visitation Committee Report (2017, pp. 12–14)*

Informed by the stakeholders’ mapping exercise to identify causes of university strikes that involved the top executives as well as administrative and academic officers of MAK, six top reasons for student discontent emerged. These were ranked in order of importance as perceived by the respondent stakeholders as: (1) policy formulation process and dissemination methods, (2) policy rejection, for example fees policy and charges, (3) delayed results, (4) missing marks, (5) poor general sanitation, in particular, filthy lavatories, and (6) poor food quality. Among these, the key causes of the students’ dissatisfaction from the perspective of top university management and student leadership were categorised into the following three themes, namely, (1) governance issues: the manner of the formulation and dissemination of university policies e.g. policies

concerning fees and other charges; (2) academic concerns: examination and results management; and (3) welfare issues: adequacy of facilities, sanitation and food quality (MAK Visitation Committee report, 2016). The report further illuminated the four main triggers of strikes in order of weight as university policy on fees and charges, poor examination management system, staff strikes spilling over to students and other policies deemed to be unfavourable to students.

It is important to note that, since 1922, MAK has been admitting international students and that any demonstrations, riots or strikes involving students, academic and non-academic staff have negative repercussions for all students regardless of country of origin. Similarly, the recurrent strikes and demonstrations impact negatively on the university's key functions of teaching, learning and research and, consequently, tarnish its reputation inside the country and globally (MAK Visitation Committee report, 2017, p. xv). When asked during the interviews what they considered to be a major challenge, strikes were repeatedly mentioned. Quotations that speak to this finding provide evidence of diverse experiences and illustrated the pain and anguish which students endure during strikes. In support of the concerns about the negative impact on the image of the university, a respondent illuminated in his response that *"the only thing that I always hear people talk about MAK, which discourages them from coming here, is the concern about the frequency of strikes"* [MAK6 – Kenyan]. Similar views were expressed as follows:

*I have seen strikes during semesters 1, 2, 3 and 4 [basically in two academic years]. Like during the first strike I was a little scared. I thought they had focused their attention on international students and they would attack us maybe, but other than that, the way it affects me, I miss some lectures and to make up for the lost time lectures are extended towards the end of the semester which creates pressure and stress to cope with the demands of the course [MAK11 – Ethiopian].*

*... strikes are a problem to international students because you have a specific time in which you intend to finish the course ... and go back home; but when study time is extended, it diverts your energy and increases costs [MAK15 – Somali].*

From another perspective, a respondent shared an experience riddled with uncertainty, pain and feelings of hopelessness which vividly described the effects of strike on international students. The student explained:

*God me, I hate strikes ... one time I didn't know what was going on, I ended up running, fell down and stopped at my hostel ... Sometimes I just remain at home ... It delays so many things. Like this year, 2017, I lost hope of ever coming back to campus because we closed*

*at that time when I knew it was my final year and it was, like, what is going to happen. Now that we are back let them do something to stop strikes” [MAK8 – Tanzanian].*

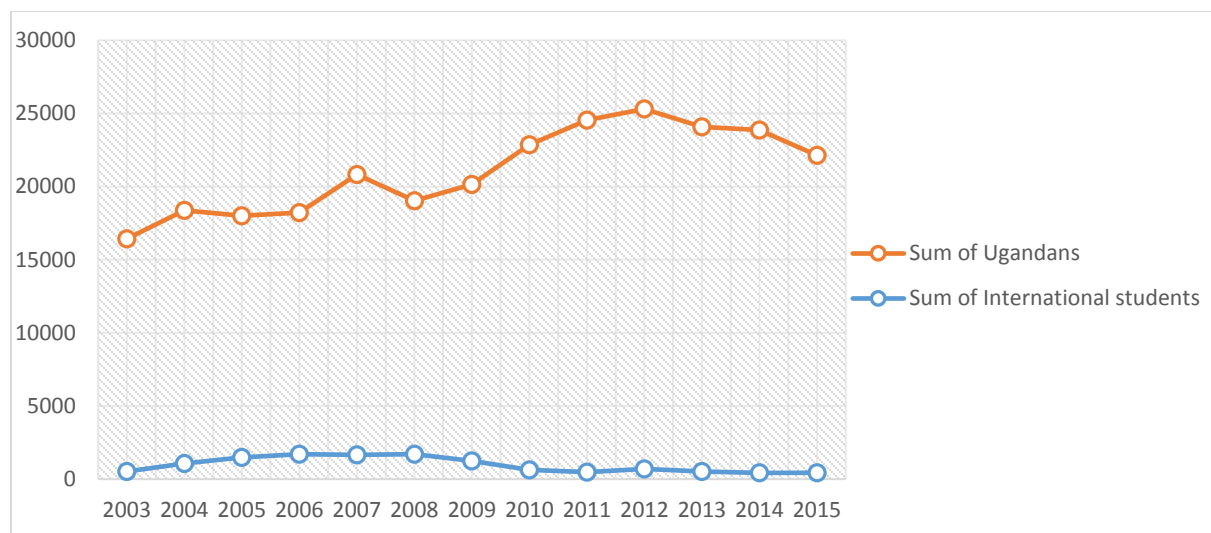
Reflecting on the strategic nature of the international students’ travel arrangements, strikes and the closure of the university, a respondent reasoned that:

*The strikes affect us more as international students than the Ugandans because they can easily go back home. For me, it’s very easy because I stay live in Burundi ... and even now I can board a bus and I go home. Let me say, if you are from Italy or Egypt, it’s far and, when there is a strike they chase us from the hostel or tell us if, you are to stay here, you have to pay extra money ... so, imagine trying to get a ticket after closing the university ... It’s not very easy to go abruptly, without planning, because you have to plan your movements [MAK3 – Burundian].*

The views expressed above suggested that the strikes affect international students in diverse ways, for example, physically when students are harmed during the strike, financially due to increased expenditure incurred as a result of the extension of the study period, and emotionally due to the stress, uncertainty over study plans and coping mechanisms required to adopt in such circumstance. Similarly, the international students lose out on time as the university compensates for the lectures which were cancelled during the strike period and this affects their future plans due to the non-completion of course as initially planned and expected.

Jaume and Willén (2017) observes that teachers’ participation in strikes implies reduced teaching and learning time for students and, over time, impacts negatively on the quality of the learning outcomes. However, Kasozi (2015) argues that student strikes demonstrate the need for the university management to include them in the day to day management of the university. However, it would seem that MAK, in the execution of its mandate as provided for under UOTIA (2001), as amended, in determining tuition fees did not extensively consult or incorporate the students’ views, leading to student protests. (MAK Visitation Committee Report, 2017). This then prompted government intervention which led to the abandonment of the implementation of the tuition fees policy. The effect of strikes on the international students’ choice of MAK is illustrated in the total admission statistics over the years, as indicated in the line Figure 7.1 below.

**Figure 7. 1: A line graph showing the trend in the decline in the admission of international students at MAK for the preceding 13 year s(2003-2015).**



*Source: Makerere University Visitation Committee Report (2017, p. 194)*

On the basis of the study findings and official records on the frequent strikes involving academic and non-academic staff members and student demonstrations and riots, it appears that the unfriendly environment created by these occurrences have had a negative impact on Makerere University. While there may be other contributory factors, it is observed in the line graph above that there was a modest decline of in the number of international students admitted over the years. The MAK Visitation Committee Report (2017, p. 194) indicates that international students comprised 8 to 9% of the total university admission between the 2005 to 2008 academic years but that a sharp decline of 2 to 3% in admission was experienced in the academic years 2010 to 2015. It is argued that strikes have been a key push factor in respect of the international students' choice of MAK considering that the university had experienced frequent strikes during the same period (2005–2015) and also in the following years. It is important to note that the population show an interest whenever student unrest occurs on the campus. According to Kasozi (2015, p. 7), this is because what affects the students is, to some extent, a reflection of society's immediate concerns. This may explain the sympathy from the community even when, during strikes, students destroy people's property in the vicinity of the university.

### **7.7. Greatest Challenges experienced**

The study interrogated international students on the major challenges they had encountered during their study in Uganda. The interview findings speak to the diverse nature of the challenges experienced. A frequently mentioned major challenge was financial in nature and specifically related to tuition fees and the mode of payment. The students responded as follows:



*... tuition fees are supposed to be paid in US dollars ... for the time we have been studying here, it keeps on rising and as it increases our school fees too and, if it decreases, our school fees decrease .This is a challenge to our sponsors because, when tuition fees are high, they find it very difficult to pay [KIU7 – Nigerian].*

*... when you have a balance they start charging you late payment charges and, usually, it goes up to \$150 per semester as a maximum and then, if there is a balance and you carry it forward to the next semester, they add 25% to the \$150 [KIU13 – Zambian].*

A challenging experience filled with emotions, frustration and appeal was described in the following quotation:

*...I was supposed to have graduated this year [2017]. I came here in 2013/2014, studied for one semester. I had paid half of the tuition, I did all the tests and coursework but they couldn't allow me to sit my exams ... I felt so bad so I went back home. I re-applied in the new academic year and gained admission. My parents have been behind my tuition though sometimes it has been tough ... I almost missed sitting my exams but ... I was able to raise the fees from my friends, both Kenyans and Ugandans [MAK1 – Kenyan].*

While the international students did not challenge the issue of the payment of fees at all during the interviews, what did emerge from the interview data analysis was the perceived unfairness of the university policy that the international students' fees are paid in US dollars which, when converted into Ugandan shillings, was twice as much as the amount paid by the Ugandan students who paid in the local currency. The study also found that, despite the commonly held notion that international students come from well to do families, this is not always the case. In addition, there is limited capacity within the university to provide funding for students in need (Harman, 2003). In addition, the findings indicated that one of the international students' major challenge was that of missing coursework, test and examination results and accessing up to date results on the university system. In this vein one of the respondents revealed: *"I have been having problems since my second year trying to get my results and I have never got them and I am in my 4th year but still I don't have the results"* [MAK5 – Kenyan]. This indicated an inadequate system in respect of addressing the students concerns in respect of marks and the resultant frustration experienced with one of the respondents declaring that *"... you do your exam papers, after you miss your results and ... you complain, but things don't get solved the way you wanted them to be"* [KIU9 – Rwandese].

## **7.8. Summary of Findings**

The study established that there were international student friendship networks with Ugandan students which were based on their desire to achieve their academic goals with the support of Ugandan students. However, the results indicates limited interaction among international students caused by a number of factors. In respect of the international students' opinion of Ugandan students, in the main they regarded the Ugandan students as socially good, friendly, receptive and willing to help. Although, it also emerged that not all Ugandan students were considered as friendly and receptive as they appeared to be somewhat reserved in relation to forming friendships with international students. In addition, the Ugandan students were viewed as academically serious, engaging and intelligent even though it was also opined that some were somewhat lazy, slow in their approach to life and occasionally proud. The study also found that disrespectful treatment and exploitation occurred off campus involving the landlords, licensed private motor vehicle and motorcycle transporters, market vendors and bias on the streets on the part of the citizens and the police. It was also established that the university appeared to play a limited role in facilitating the international students' access to accommodation. This limited involvement provided private accommodation providers to exploit the international students by charging them exorbitant accommodation fees. In respect of the Ugandan transport system, the result indicated that, when international students engage with transporters, they experience unethical practices, exploitation, and physical and emotional humiliation meted by the private operators. In addition, strikes were found to affect the international students in diverse ways including difficulties in coping academically, physically, emotionally, financially and with the uncertainty about their future plans. In short, the study found that the major challenges which the international students experienced were financial in nature and, specifically, in respect of tuition fees and the mode of payment.

## **Chapter Eight Summary of Findings, Recommendations and Conclusions**

### **8.1. Introduction**

This chapter combines the findings, conclusions and recommendations derived from the study. The summary and conclusions are based on Chapters four, five, six and seven in which the findings were presented, analysed and interpreted. The findings aim of the study, namely, to understand the push factors from the home country and the pull factors into Uganda that influenced international students to choose Uganda and the university they were attending at the time of the study as their

study destinations and their lived experiences. The following specific research questions that were investigated and which guided the presentation of the summary of the findings, recommendations, and conclusions in this chapter included: (1) what are the pull factors that motivate international students to choose Uganda and the university as their study destination? (2) What push factors motivate international students leave their countries to study in Uganda and at the university they are attending? and (3) What are the lived experiences of international students at Ugandan universities? (Refer to 1.5.1).

A sequential mixed methods research design was applied in answering the specific research questions. The first phase of the investigation involved an online survey instrument which was mailed to the international students' email addresses provided by the Makerere University (which is a public university) and the Kampala International University (which is a private university). The first 15 respondents who indicated in the survey instrument their willingness to participate in the in-depth interviews [second phase of the investigation] were invited to do so and engaged in a one on one, semi-structured interview session that lasted between 45 and 60 minutes. With the respondent's consent, each interview was audio-recorded. The quantitative and qualitative findings that emerged from each institution were analysed. The presentation of the findings was integrative in nature.

The study was guided by the pull–push migration theory as originally proposed by Ravenstein (1889) and later improved upon by Mazzarol and Soutar (2002). The essence of this theory is that migration of people is governed by a “push-pull” process; i.e. unfavourable conditions in one place “push” people out while favourable conditions in an external location “pull” them in. This theory was found to be relevant to this study because it guided the contextualisation of international student mobility within the framework of push-pull factors in the country of origin and Uganda as the destination country. This theory provided the lens through which the analysis and the interpretation of the findings were conducted. In the interests of clarity in the presentation, analysis and interpretation of the findings, this chapter summarises, draws conclusions and makes recommendations based on the findings in Chapter four (choice of Uganda as a destination country), Chapter five (choice of MAK and KIU), Chapter six (academic experiences) and Chapter seven (socioeconomic experiences). It is important to note that the findings on the international students' lived experience are presented in two chapters with the academic and socioeconomic

experiences being presented separately to meet the need for clarity in the findings, recommendations, and conclusions.

## **8.2. Summary of Findings on MAK and KIU International Students' Choice of Uganda**

In this section, findings in respect of the choice of Uganda as a destination country, as discussed in Chapter four, are summarised with specific factors for each institution being illuminated.

Informed by relevant literature, the documentary analysis and empirical evidence, it was found that the major pull factors in order of importance that the international students at MAK had considered in their choice of Uganda included the opportunity for academic research in Uganda, the expectation of better future job prospects with a Ugandan education, other factors, desire to improve English, location of Uganda close to home country, lower cost of living in Uganda, easy visa process in Uganda, political stability and safety as compared to home country and desire to experience Ugandan culture. The pull factors identified which were less important in the choice of Uganda were found to be having family and friends in Uganda, advice from professor/teacher/counsellor to study in Uganda, getting away from home and receipt of government funds to study in Uganda. Specific to KIU the pull factors identified in order of importance in the choice of Uganda were an easy visa processing, desire to improve English language ability, expectation of better future job prospects with Ugandan education, opportunity for academic research, political stability and safety compared to home country, lower cost of living, having family and friends in Uganda and desire to experience Ugandan culture. In addition, and in sequential order, the study also found factors that contributed less to pull international students to Uganda as proximity to the home country, advice from professors/lecturers/counsellor, getting away from home and receipt of government scholarships.

In comparative terms, a noteworthy observation from the findings on MAK and KIU was the difference in the reason considered to be the most important in the choice of Uganda as a study country. The international students at MAK regarded the opportunity to undertake academic research as critical for the achievement of their academic and professional growth. I would argue that, as compared to their counterparts at KIU, these students were more focused on realising their academic goals through acquiring research skills and that this may have informed their decision to enrol in a study abroad programme in Uganda. On the other hand, for their counterparts in KIU, the most important and influential reason for the choice of Uganda was the ease of processing visa

for travel. I present the view that the KIU international students considered ease of travel document processing as more important than the academic goals which may suggest that they were more adventurous than their MAK counterparts. The preceding claim agrees with a finding that many students attend a university with less focus on gaining knowledge and skills (Bigabwenkya, 2013, p. 227) despite the fact that attaining a higher education qualification is associated with satisfactory employment, career growth and development (Dosunmu, 2015). Less important reasons for the choice of Uganda but common to the findings from both MAK and KIU were advice from professors/lecturers/counsellor, getting away from home and receipt of government scholarship. Although in the case of MAK having family and friends in Uganda appeared to be of relative importance and influence in the list of less important factors, this was not identified in the KIU findings. Similarly, for KIU, proximity to home country was relatively important among the least influential factors identified but was not mentioned in the MAK less influential factors. The difference in the prioritisation of the reasons for their choice illustrates some degree of divergence in the conceptualisation and thought process of the international students in the two institutions although, in the main, the less important and influential factors were similar. The analysis of the qualitative findings complemented the findings on the pull factors identified from the survey data. Common themes that emerged as pull factors for both MAK and KIU were political and geographical considerations, socio-cultural factors, hospitable environment, family and parental influence and economic factors, specifically tuition and cost of living while flexible university admission process was specific to KIU.

In respect of the international students' push factors from home country to Uganda, the study established the following from the survey: longer course duration, unavailability of courses in home country, sponsorship conditions, poor quality of education, high cost of education and country at war. The themes that emerged from the qualitative findings as push factors and common to both institutions were crystallised as academic (poor results, unavailability of desired course at home, poor quality of education at home, long course duration, and heavy content); sponsorship conditions, family, and personal push factors. Specific to the KIU findings policy related push factor was identified (see 4.6.5).

### **8.3. Summary of Findings for International Students' Reasons for the Choice of MAK and KIU**

In this section the findings in respect of the choice of either MAK or KIU, as discussed in Chapter five, are summarized. Specific factors are illuminated for each institution in the paragraphs below.

Specific to Makerere University, the choice factors that international students considered in order of importance and influence were established as interested in a specific educational programme at MAK, better quality of higher education as compared to home country, the best university to which I was able to gain admission, others (MAK cheaper than other universities in Uganda, important graduates from MAK, current innovations taking place at MAK, opportunity for networking, love for MAK, political stability and safety and prevailing peace in the country), offer of financial assistance, and geographical location in Uganda. The factors with a minimal contribution to the international students' choice of MAK were found to be advice from my professor/teacher/counsellor to study at MAK, the opportunity for research with a professor at MAK and a desire to study in Uganda. It is puzzling to note that MAK was chosen for its quality and because of its renown in respect of research intensiveness yet the factor of conducting research with a particular academic was not critical in influencing their choice. I speculate that much of the research undertaken by the academics at MAK is not widely disseminated and that this lack of exposure may limit the effect of such knowledge on international students with aspirations of undertaking research and charting their career in the academic world.

Specific to Kampala International University the choice factors which the international students had considered in order of importance and influence were established as I was interested in a specific programme, this was the best university at which I was able to gain admission, geographical location in Uganda, better quality of higher education as compared to my home country, classes conducted in English, other factors and opportunity to do research with a professor at KIU. According to the findings, the less important and influential factors considered in the choice of KIU included I just wanted to study in Uganda, my professor/teacher/counsellor advised me to do so, I was offered financial assistance and the diverse student community.

A critical examination of the three top pull factors in respect of MAK (desire for a specific educational programme, better quality of higher education and it was best university at which I was able to gain admission) highlights the academic focus of MAK international students in their

choice process. Informed by the findings of this study, MAK was considered to offer quality education and the best in science related discipline (Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Veterinary Medicine, Agricultural Science, ICT); business related courses and social sciences (see figure 4.1 on page 92). Based on the course majors of the international students enrolled at MAK, the international students tended more to engineering, human and animal health; and the agricultural sciences. It is argued that admission to such courses was based on the good grades that the international students had attained at high school, thus enabling them to meet the admission criteria and overcome competition for the available vacancies. It is reasonable to believe that the students admitted to these courses were first class students with a focus on achievement and desire to excel in their future careers. Moreover, it is argued that their enrolment in these courses was motivated by the desire to realise their academic and professional aspirations in a high quality education system but that such opportunities were either not available in their home countries or they had no faith in the capacity of the institutions in their home countries to facilitate the achievement of their desires. The academic superiority of MAK is clear in its high reputation and the ranking that placed it 3<sup>rd</sup> in Africa and the best in Uganda and the EAC region (MAK Visitation Committee Report, 2016).

Meanwhile, according to findings, KIU was considered to be the best in the fields of ICT, engineering, social sciences and business and commerce related courses in order of preference as reflected in the data on course majors (see Chapter 4, section 4.2.2 on page 93). On the basis of the course majors highlighted I postulate that students admitted for these courses are competent in both the science and non-science disciplines despite the fact that it emerged from the findings that students with relatively lower grades are admitted by KIU. The attractiveness of these academic programs and courses for international students at both MAK and KIU would seem to imply that either these courses are not available in their home country institutions or the institutions lack capacity to deliver them. This analysis is in line with the survey findings (Tables: 4.2 and 4:4) that indicated that the key pull factor for the international students in their choice of MAK or KIU was the “desire to undertake specific study programmes” for both institutions and the desire for quality education (see 5.1.2 and 5.2.4), as reflected in the themes that emerged in the qualitative analysis.

However, focusing on KIU, three key pull factors (desire for a specific education programme, it was the best university at which I was able to gain admission, and geographical location), it emerged that both academic and geographical considerations had informed the international students' selection processes. It was observed that geographical location in Uganda was ranked third, rather than a focus on the physical infrastructure and equipment of the university, an analysis of the activities of surrounding institutions and organisations (Rutter et al., 2016) explains KIU's attractiveness to international students. KIU is located approximately seven kilometres from Kampala city centre in a busy suburb of Kansanga along towards Gabba beach. In its the immediate vicinity there are four other universities (International University of East Africa (IUEA), Kampala University, Cavendish University and Islamic University in Uganda (IUIU) that attract and admit international students. Similarly it is within an environment that houses a number of international organisations, including the American embassy and residences for high profile diplomats where a 24 hour police foot and motorised patrols are carried out. It is easily accessible by public transport both during the day and at night and there is a high concentration of recreational facilities (bars, dance halls, hotels, casinos). It was clear that the geographical location described provided avenues through which they could develop and nurture the friendships that would meet their social need to belong and provided by the multitude of other international students in circulation, the recreational facilities that operated day and night and convenient transport that facilitated their mobility within a secure environment. It was, thus, clear that these considerations, together with their academic aspirations attracted international students to enrol at KIU.

#### **8.4. Summary of Findings on International Students' Academic Experience**

This section, contains a summary of the findings in respect to the choice of Uganda as discussed in Chapter six. Specific factors are illuminated for each institution in the paragraphs below.

Academic experiences are unique to each student and are informed by the academic backgrounds with varying linguistic applications in class, values, and scholarly traditions in the education systems. When exposed to a new education system, gaining academic experience requires the individual's absorption and/or immersion into the daily activities of an educational institution. Through interaction, behaviours, values and competencies are gained, thus forming an experience arising from the engagement. In the course of this study, it emerged that international students are adjust to the new academic environment, and, gain new academic experiences (Tran, 2010). In



respect to MAK, in the main the academic experiences attained were deemed to be rewarding in respect of the application and admission processes, teaching and learning processes, an academic load that was specific and not too burdensome, interaction between academic staff and international students. However, the international students did express their dissatisfaction with the management of examination results and the repeated strikes. In the case of KIU, the academic experiences were found to be satisfactory in respect of an easy admission process and cordial student-lecturer relationships although concerns about limited internship placement and the poor management of examination results appeared, among others, were expressed. After this overview the details of each theme are highlighted in the paragraphs below.

In respect of the application for admission, the process was found to be relatively easy with few challenges although some students did indicate that they experienced difficulties. In some cases, third party had applied on behalf of a student. The ease in the application process was found to be more pronounced in the case of the international students in KIU as compared to MAK. In relation to teaching and learning, the study found that the approaches adopted in both MAK and KIU were new and relied more on research course work, group discussion and presentation in plenary as compared to the home countries. While the majority of the students indicated their satisfaction with the teaching and learning styles, a few expressed their dissatisfactions with the approaches applied as being teacher centred and not challenging, thus suggesting that the teaching and learning processes in the home countries were more learner based as compared to those adopted at MAK and KIU. Overall the study found the student-faculty relationship to be cordial and supportive despite some few cases of uncooperative faculty members which were attributed to their personalities. In respect of the academic load, it was found to be specific and less demanding and met the students' expectation. On the impact of studying in Uganda and on the self-rated basis, the respondents indicated that they felt they had gained professional competence in their respective disciplines of study. Based on their existing academic experiences, the respondents suggested the following strategies to improve the services offered at MAK and KIU, namely, the provision of accommodation, opening up a channel of communication between students and university management, bringing the tuition fees of national and international students into line and helping students acquire study visas from the Immigration Department.

The study established that there was a strong desire among the international students to recommend to their friends, family and peers that they to enrol at MAK or KIU. In light of this strong desire, it would appear that the international students were aware of changes that they had undergone as a result of their academic engagement with the university curriculum and that they believed that others would also benefit from attending MAK or KIU .With this in mind, it is observed that a service or product consumer will only recommend another to the same service provider if the service user experiences the product or service are rewarding or satisfactory. I argue that the satisfaction with the academic experiences was due to a pleasant faculty-student relationship, the quality of teaching during class engagements as well as the curriculum and the course content. Positive interactions between international students and lecturers, both in class and outside of the class environment, promotes academic satisfaction (Wen, Wu, & Hao, 2017). I further contend that the international students expressed their willingness to recommend the university in question because they had developed a positive emotional attachment to and identified with the university as a result of its contribution in their scholarly and professional advancement but, most importantly, because of the the acquired new skills, knowledge, competencies, values, attitude and perspectives they had acquired. Based on the preceding analysis, it is argued that the students' willingness to recommend the university in question is based on their assessment of the value of the quality of teaching and learning to which they have been exposed and the resultant learning outcome they had achieved, the nature of the existing physical facilities notwithstanding. In other words, their willingness to recommend the university was not based on the facilities available but on the perceived level of lecturer's preparedness and quality of delivery of content in class have greater influence of their general satisfaction with the institution (Thomas & Galambos, 2004). In their view, if students are considered to be the customers, then higher education institutions are obliged to satisfy their expectations while it is a satisfied customer who will encourage new customers to use the service an organisation offers.

Based on the findings of this study, it appeared evident that the international students considered themselves as customers whose interest and expectations must be satisfied by either MAK or KIU. The respondents who had expressed their dissatisfaction with the mode of class delivery as being teacher centred rather than student led, course content, internship placement, among others, had also indicated their unwillingness to recommend their courses and university to others. It is argued that an unwillingness to recommend signifies bitterness as well as an overall emotional

disengagement from the university with little sense of belonging to the university on account of its perceived failure to facilitate the realisation of their academic and professional expectations. However, the dissatisfaction notwithstanding, the following strategies to attract international students were suggested, namely, update the website with the correct information, bring the fees paid by local and international students into line and in the same currency, regardless of nationality, rebuild the public image of MAK which had been tainted by recurrent strikes, treat current international students well, and improve infrastructure and equipment in both universities.

The overall international students' academic experiences in a destination country are a function of the institutionally approved policies and curriculum within an education system. It is argued that programmes, plans, activities, processes and practices which are focused on the attainment of academic outcomes necessitates a detailed assessment to acquire information required to validate the claims of academic achievement by the international students. Similarly, it is important to determine how the dimensions listed above influence both MAK and KIU's institutional arrangements, processes and practices in their effort to build the capacity of international students. James (2014) maintains, that, if objective assessments of the students' academic experiences are to be made, the focus should be on analysing the competencies gained in respect of critical thinking, the degree of deep learning that occurred, and the confidence levels developed as a result of mastering the discipline in question together with the ability to independently manage an assignment in the profession. While the international student's claims of academic achievement made in this study were derived on a self-rated basis, I submit that a more scientific trace study on their opinions be conducted after graduation to validate their claims and that it include input from their employers. The findings of such a study would either confirm or refute the claims of about the quality education offered at MAK and KIU respectively.

### **8.5. Summary of Findings on International Students' Socioeconomic Experience**

This subsection presents recommendations arising from the socioeconomic experiences of the MAK and KIU international students as based on the findings discussed in Chapter seven. As indicated earlier, some recommendations apply to both institutions while some are intended specifically for one of the universities. The following aspects are discussed, namely, friendship, disrespectful treatment, opinion of Ugandan students, transport and accommodation experiences, effect of strikes and the challenges faced

The study found that, with the aim of realising their academic goals, the international students nurtured and developed more friendships and networks with Ugandan students than with other international students. In relation to the international students' opinions of Ugandan students, the study found that the majority of the participants regarded their Ugandan counterparts sociable, good, friendly and willing to help although some of them indicated that they had not found all Ugandan students to be friendly and receptive. In fact, some of them were found to be reserved or withdrawn in their responses to the international students' overtures of friendship. From a broader perspective, in the main the international students viewed the Ugandan students as academically serious, engaging and intelligent although they also expressed the view that their Ugandan counterparts were somewhat lazy, slow in their approach in life and occasionally proud. While this finding appeared to be contradictory, it was in response to the question "what is your opinion of Ugandan students?" Character formation starts from childhood and becomes observable when people interact. It is possible that, during their academic engagements, the Ugandan students actively engaged in the search for relevant literature, read extensively and, possibly, discussed matters with their fellow students. However, in a different context, not an academic context, for example, in social circles, given the differences in background, culture, exposure and beliefs, interacting with people about whom one knows little may have made the Ugandan students reserved. This may happen and be observed by their withdrawal as they studied the characters, personalities and value systems of the international students before committing to friendship. The preceding analysis is in line with the concept of ethnocentrism (Harrison, 2012) which is conceptualised as one's preference for interacting with people in circles of a known culture and explains one's opinions of and attitudes towards persons who are from other .Alternatively, rather than adopt such a cautious approach and, if they do not like the individual concerned, they may speak their minds with this being interpreted as arrogance or pride. This finding could as well be an illustration of the limited capacity of Ugandan students to deal with a diverse population of people with different backgrounds and of different dispositions or an act of outright discrimination based on nationality. On the other hand, ascertaining the Ugandan students' opinions of the international students may, possibly, counter this finding.

The study also found that disrespectful treatment and apparent discrimination based on nationality was practised in the university by some of the lecturers, non-academic staff, and student community but was more pronounced among the non-academic staff. Similar findings of

disrespectful treatment and discrimination were found to occur outside of the campus environment and involving the landlords, licensed private motor vehicle and motorcycle transporters and market vendors as was bias on the streets on the part of the citizens. Moreover, it was established that the universities appear to play a distant and limited role in facilitating the international students' access to accommodation. This limited involvement resulted in private accommodation providers offering accommodation at an exaggerated cost. It is therefore recommended that this be regulated by the university.

In respect of the Ugandan transport system, it was found that the international students experienced unethical practice, exploitation, humiliation, corruption and being taken advantage of due to their limited capacity to deal with state machinery to get appropriate redress. In addition, the study that the international students were affected by the strikes in diverse ways including difficulties to cope with the situation : academically when, for example, the course units not taught during the strike had to be taught and tests and coursework completed a very short time; physical difficulties when they were hurt during the strikes, difficulties dealing with the emotional stress and worries associated with such tense moments; financial difficulties, especially when they had to spend extra money for semesters which were extended to compensate for the time lost during the strike, and uncertainty about their future plans. The study found that the major challenges faced by the international students included: financial concerns and, specifically, tuition fees and the mode of payment, not receiving their examination results, problems in accessing up to date test and coursework results from the university system, and communication with the community outside of the university due to a lack of ability to speak the local language.

## **8.5. Recommendations for possible adoption**

Based on the empirical findings, the recommendations based on the study findings are presented under each theme as follows:

### **8.5.1. MAK and KIU International Students' Choice of Uganda**

This subsection offers synthesised recommendations for the attention of both government and the two universities based on the findings and the discussion in Chapter four on the factors which played a role in the international students' choice of Uganda as a study destination country.

It is recommended that the government invest more in making Uganda an attractive education destination country by designing an internationalisation policy and strategy that must be

incorporated into the national development plans and implemented at all levels of the education system. In addition, in order to support the implementation of the internationalisation agenda, the government should review the immigration policies that were regarded as restrictive and discriminatory to international students. In addition, the government should revive the education desk in its embassies, missions and consulate to promote the image of Ugandan universities abroad.

### **8.5.2. International Students' Reasons for their Choice of MAK or KIU**

In this section joint recommendations are made for consideration by the two universities based on the findings from the survey, interviews and documentary analysis as well as the discussion in Chapter five on the international students' pull factors in their choice of MAK or KIU as study institutions in Uganda.

The study demonstrated that, overall, the key pull factors in the choice of MAK and KIU were academic in nature although other considerations were also at play.

In order to ensure a positive experience for the international students after admission, MAK and KIU should develop an internationalisation policy and strategy incorporating well formulated pastoral care services designed to facilitate the international students' integration. The universities should also establish new structures through which the internationalisation processes may be promoted and integrated to ensure the sustainability of the universities' internationalisation agenda.

The study established that, in the case of MAK, the information uploaded on the website was inadequate and not regularly updated. In light of this, it is recommended that MAK updates its website with the correct information on the courses offered, new courses in the offing as well as the admission requirements to make the application processes clear and simpler for international students.

The study also found that desire to enrol for specialised course programme was a key factor in the international students' choice of MAK and KIU. It is, therefore, recommended that MAK and KIU design more unique and specialised courses which will be identified with the university in question to gain a more competitive advantage over their peers.

The study established the influence of the alumni as playing a critical role in in the marketing of both MAK and KIU. Specifically Makerere University should take advantage of both the huge population of alumni across the globe and the current diverse population of international students to market the courses and programs it offers. In addition, both universities should engage in advertising their academic programmes in other countries to attract potential applicants and compete in the global higher education market. KIU, with a relatively small alumni base, should enter into a memorandum of understanding with its current alumni to act as its agents in their own countries in the interests of marketing the university.

Based on finding that undertaking research with a professor was not a key factor that had influenced the international students' choice of MAK and KIU, it is recommended that each of the universities should design programmes that enhance collaborations, partnership, joint research and academic programmes that involve the engagement of foreign academics in the Ugandan education system. These foreign academics would then act as advocates of and promote Uganda's education in their home countries and beyond.

Furthermore, both universities should invest in providing an enabling academic infrastructure (modern buildings, library, class, ICT and laboratory facilities, reliable, accessible internet services and student accommodation) that meets international standards in order to attract international students.

The findings indicated that, in both institutions, the international students' voice and concerns are not adequately heard by university management, neither are they presented effectively in the prevailing guild arrangement. Accordingly, it is recommended that a position on the guild cabinet be reserved for the international students as a channel through which their real concerns may be effectively represented by them.

### **8.5.3. International Students' Academic Experience**

Based on the findings on the experiences of the respondents in this study this subsection elaborates on considered detailed strategies that it is anticipated, if applied, would improve the academic experiences of future international students. These proposed action points are informed by the discussion in Chapter six which focused on the academic experiences of international students at MAK and KIU respectively. Accordingly, some of the suggested actions are specific to each institution while some are applicable to both institutions.

The study found that the curricula offered at MAK and KIU at the time of the study were predominantly theory based with relatively practicum time. In light of this it is suggested that both institutions redesign the curricula for all courses to ensure that more time is allocated for practical/field work sessions than was the practice at the time of the study with more classwork and, hence, theory intensive delivery.

This study found that, in both institutions, the international students always faced challenges to relation to accessing examination results. In this regard, therefore, it is recommended that MAK and KIU pay attention to putting systems in place to rectify this problem. This could include, for example, giving lecturers deadlines by which the results must be finalised and accessible to the students on condition that the student has paid the university fees in full.

The study also established that international students often face challenges in respect of disrespectful treatment within the university by staff members. It is, therefore, recommended that all staff, regardless of their levels in the academic and non-academic hierarchy, are sensitised about the university wide internationalisation policy, strategy and vision to build their capacity in relation to the best approaches to apply in the attainment of the internationalisation agenda. This would model the relationships built and language applied during engagement with the university processes and practices on the part of both academics and non-academics to support the international students' engagement with the university. In addition, it is recommended that both MAK and KIU should set up an adhoc, grievance handling committee whenever the need arises to attend specifically to the international students' concerns. In addition, these two institutions should develop an electronic system whereby international students could directly report to the Dean of Student by using their registration numbers as a pin code.

The study established that was much less emphasis on research processes at KIU as compared to the research intensive nature of MAK. In view of this it is recommended that KIU should engage more in student and faculty research collaboration to raise its academic profile in the area of publications in internationally recognised, peer reviewed journals. In addition, the university should identify and enter into a memorandum of understanding with organisations for the internship placement of international students to relieve them of their burden of identifying such organisations on their own in an environment with which they are not familiar.



It is also recommended that both MAK and KIU undertake a self-assessment of the services they offers to the international students as a strategy designed to guide their plans to ensure the students' academic experiences are positive. This recommendation is in line with Thomas and Galambos' (2004) view that university administrators and lecturers should always take an interest to inquiring into concerns about the students' satisfaction and improve on those aspects that receive the lowest score.

#### **8.5.4. International Students' Socio-Economic Experience**

This sub-section contains recommendations based on the discussion in Chapter seven on the socioeconomic lived experiences of international students at MAK and KIU context. This study established that international students from outside of the East African Community (EAC) studying in MAK and KIU pay twice the tuition fees compared to the Ugandan students. In light of this reality, it is recommended that the university management change the existing fee structure so that students pay the same tuition fees in the same currency and ensure that the tuition fee structure is does not discriminate against the international students. In addition, the surcharge for the late payment of tuition fees should be abolished

The study provided clear evidence that the international students are left to struggle on their own in the search for accommodation. It is, thus, recommended that the MAK and KIU fulfil their moral, legal and ethical responsibility and accord the international students' priority in the allocation of accommodation in the university halls of residence. This should be for a minimum of one year, starting in their first academic year, to give them an opportunity to acquaint themselves with the new environment and obtain alternative accommodating if they so desire. Similarly, in fulfilling its pastoral care function the universities should take an active role in designing and entering into a memorandum of understanding with the private accommodation providers stipulating the need for acceptable standards and security measures before referring international students to such facilities.

#### **8.6. Conclusions**

The main aim of this study was to analyse the reasons why international students choose to study in Uganda and, specifically, at Makerere University and Kampala International University and also their lived experiences as international students. The four main findings that emerged and which were discussed were with related to the international students' choice of Uganda as a study

destination country, the choice of MAK and KIU, their academic experiences and their socioeconomic experiences. The study revealed that the international students' choice of Uganda was informed by diverse factors which were political, security, geographical, economic, social and academic in nature. However, the academic factor was more prominent in the choice of both Uganda as the study destination country and the specific university of study. While the pull factors were an important consideration, the push factors from the home country appeared to have been more influential than the pull factors in the decision to study in Uganda.

The study found that there were diverse reasons for the choice of university but that, in the main, academic considerations and, more specifically, the desire to study a specific education programme, quality of education offered and academic ranking of the university had a significant influence on the international students' choice of a university at which to study. Furthermore, the study established that the international students had diverse academic experiences, acquired both personal and professional competence in their respective disciplines of study and were satisfied with the teaching and learning approaches applied.

The study revealed that the international students' study abroad experiences in Uganda had been fraught with challenges as a result of a socioeconomic environment that was relatively harsh and which impacted adversely on the international students' stay in the country. Clearly neither the government nor universities had created an adequate enabling environment reflective of pastoral care in the community, thus and this leaving the international students vulnerable, at risk and on their own as they addressed the challenges they faced in their lives in an unfamiliar environment where they were often exploited by the business community. Despite these challenges, it is hoped that the proposed recommendations will be considered by both the government of Uganda and the management of both institutions to increase Uganda's competitiveness in the global higher education market.

Nevertheless, in their own voices the the majority of the participants attested that they had achieved positive academic and social experiences as was exemplified in the finding on their willingness to recommend Uganda as a study destination to their relatives and friends. The overall view that emerged from this study was that the international students were satisfied with their choice of both Uganda as a study destination and the university at which they were studying as their choices had resulted in their being propelled to realise their academic and professional dreams. Although the

international students at both MAK and KIU had expressed their satisfaction, in the case of MAK, the students mentioned the repeated strikes that had severely affect them in diverse negative ways as well as affecting the image of MAK and its future as a desirable study destination.

### **8.7. The significance of the Study**

The significance of this study may be traced to four levels, namely, personal, institutional, national and international levels.

The value of the study was derived from the findings that confirmed that the international students' pull-push factors and lived experiences were diverse and context specific. As the findings indicated, the respondents had experienced both academic and social life encounters at home but that their study abroad experiences had resulted from a process of daily interactions and reflections from which had arisen the intercultural experiences, professional competence and network required in the global market (Cheung & Xu, 2014; Zhukovskiy & Simak, 2015). This aligns with the concept of global competence which refers to the ability to think, work commendably well with people from diverse cultures, and resolve challenges in distinct ways (Gary et al. 2006). I posit that both the academic and social learning experiences to which international students are exposed during their study abroad prepare them to work effectively in a global environment. In addition, the study confirmed that international student mobility is a contemporary phenomenon even if academic mobility has been a reality for many years although the direction of student flow is changing towards the less developed countries and with more focus on regionalisation (Itaaga et al., 2013; Lee & Schoole, 2015, Knight & Woldegiorgis, 2017).

The study offered specific recommendations that could inform the formation of a university internationalisation policy, structural change, strategic plans and action plans designed to improve service delivery to international students. The findings from the study positioned the Ugandan higher education system on comparable terms with its peers in the international higher education market from which international students make the choice of study destination that meets their academic aspirations.

Similarly, the study offered researched recommendations that could guide the development of an evidence-based internationalisation policy and strategy by the policymakers in government. This is in recognition of the growing number of international students that has warranted the attention

of policymakers (Halic et.al. 2009) in order to understand their unique concerns and needs while studying in a foreign country (Özturgut & Murphy, 2009). Similarly, at the institutional level, the findings should create an opportunity for the better understanding of the dynamics of international students in terms of their aspirations, experiences and concerns.

At the international level, the significance of the study may be seen in its contribution to the existing literature on student mobility that tends to focus more on developed country study destinations countries such as the US, UK and Australia (Hazelkorn, 2011) and less on the countries that have attracted international students for a long time but which have not been the subject of researched or documentation. In particular, the study provided a synthesis of the literature on internationalisation and student mobility from the African perspective but with a focus on the Ugandan experience as based on the MAK and KIU study findings. It is anticipated that, based on the challenges highlighted in the study, governments and higher education institutions will engage in collaborative partnerships to overcome the obstacles to international student mobility as strategies to supports regionalisation of higher education.

### **8.8. Limitations of the Study**

Given the design of this study, there are certain aspects that may have limited the findings. In view of the fact that it was self-assessment study based on the participants' views of their experiences and their perceptions, which may have been deceptive with no scientific means to determine their veracity, the results are based on views which cannot be claimed to be an objective measure of validity. However, the utility of such a study is that it illuminates the way in which the respondents understand and feel about their experiences.

Indeed, the findings are based on the ethical values which guided each participant applied during their participation in the study as they filled in the online survey instrument and in the in-depth, structured interviews. It was beyond the capacity of this study to determine whether or not they had received assistance while filling in the survey instrument. However, it was assumed that the respondents had responded independently without any influence from an external source. Similarly, relying on memory in the answering of questions may cause a recall bias and this may have affected the results in a negative way, thus slanting the results (Glick, 2010).

It is not possible to generalise the study findings in view of the fact that the study focused on an internationally and nationally highly ranked public university, MAK, with a long record of engagement with international students, and a less internationally ranked, but nationally recognised, private university, KIU, with a high number of international students. Both universities are located in the Ugandan capital, Kampala. Thus, the views presented in this study may not optimally reflect the experiences of international students enrolled in rural-based and/or lower ranked universities in Uganda.

Access to official records in respect of student enrolment per academic year was a daunting task marred by outright rejection, allegedly in the interests of protecting the interests of the university while, in some cases, the information accessed was contradictory.

### **8.9. Areas for Future Resesarch**

In line with the available literature, for example, Odebero (2015) and Knight and Woldegiorgis (2017), the study ascertained that academic factors play a major role in attracting international students both to Uganda and to the universities they chose. Empirical evidence from the study highlighted that social factors are key in the international students' study abroad experiences. In light of this finding, a further scientific inquiry could be conducted into the way in which the social factors contribute to the academic success of international students. Furthermore, a study could be commissioned to compare the experiences of international students from urban and rural-based public and/or private universities to investigate any unique characteristics that may emerge and also how forces play out in different geographical contexts.

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## ANNEXURES

### Annexure A: Letter from Ministry of Education Science, Technology and Sports

Telegram: "EDUCATION"

Telephone 234451/8



Ministry of Education, Science  
Technology & Sports  
Embassy House  
P.O. Box 7063  
Kampala,  
Uganda

In any correspondence on  
this subject please quote No: ADM 95/121/01

**25<sup>th</sup> April 2016**

Professor M. T. Schoole  
Head of Department Education Management and Policy Studies  
University of Pretoria  
South Africa

#### **PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH ON ACADEMIC STUDENT MOBILITY IN AFRICA, THE CASE STUDY OF UGANDA**

Your letter dated 15<sup>th</sup> February 2016 on the above subject matter refers.

In your letter you indicated that the study will be conducted in two Universities in Uganda namely Makerere University (MUK) and Kampala International University (KIU) respectively.

The purpose of this letter therefore, is to inform you that permission has been granted to your student Kiiza Kenneth Alfred a PHD student and Lecturer at Uganda Management Institute to carryout research in the two Universities.

By copy of this letter the Commissioner Higher Education, Ministry of Education, Science Technology and Sports and the Vice Chancellors of the two Universities are hereby informed and requested to provide the necessary assistance.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rose Nassali Lukwago".

Dr. Rose Nassali Lukwago  
**PERMANENT SECRETARY**

Copy: The Commissioner Higher Education, MoESTS  
The Vice Chancellor, Makerere University, Kampala  
The Vice Chancellor, Kampala International University, Kampala

## Annexure B: Approval letter from National Council for Science and Technology



### Uganda National Council for Science and Technology

(Established by Act of Parliament of the Republic of Uganda)

Our Ref: SS 4093

21<sup>st</sup> June 2016

Kiiza Kenneth Alfred  
Uganda Management Institute  
Kampala

**Re: Research Approval: Pull-Push Factors and International Students Experiences in Uganda: A Case Study of Two Universities**

I am pleased to inform you that on **06/06/2016**, the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST) approved the above referenced research project. The Approval of the research project is for the period **06/06/2016 to 06/06/2019**.

Your research registration number with the UNCST is **SS 4093**. Please, cite this number in all your future correspondences with UNCST in respect of the above research project.

As Principal Investigator of the research project, you are responsible for fulfilling the following requirements of approval:

1. All co-investigators must be kept informed of the status of the research.
2. Changes, amendments, and addenda to the research protocol or the consent form (where applicable) must be submitted to the designated Research Ethics Committee (REC) or Lead Agency for re-review and approval **prior** to the activation of the changes. UNCST must be notified of the approved changes within five working days.
3. For clinical trials, all serious adverse events must be reported promptly to the designated local REC for review with copies to the National Drug Authority.
4. Unexpected events involving risks to research subjects/participants must be reported promptly to the UNCST. New information that becomes available which alters the risk/benefit ratio must be submitted promptly for UNCST review.
5. Only approved study procedures are to be implemented. The UNCST may conduct impromptu audits of all study records.
6. A progress report must be submitted electronically to UNCST within four weeks after every 12 months. Failure to do so may result in termination of the research project.

Below is a list of documents approved with this application:

	Document Title	Language	Version	Version Date
1.	Research proposal	English	N/A	N/A
2.	Survey Questionnaire	English	N/A	N/A
3.	International Student Interview Survey	English	N/A	N/A
4.	Interview Protocol	English	N/A	N/A

Yours sincerely,

  
Hellen. N. Opolot  
For: Executive Secretary  
**UGANDA NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

cc. Chair, Gulu University Research Ethics Committee

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#### LOCATION/CORRESPONDENCE

Plot 6 Kimera Road, Ntinda  
P. O. Box 6884  
KAMPALA, UGANDA

#### COMMUNICATION

TEL: (256) 414 705500  
FAX: (256) 414-234579  
EMAIL: [info@uncst.go.ug](mailto:info@uncst.go.ug)  
WEBSITE: <http://www.uncst.go.ug>

## Annexure C: Letter of Permission from MAK to conduct the Study



### OFFICE OF THE VICE-CHANCELLOR

**Professor John Ddumba - Ssentamu**  
BA Econ (Mak), MA Econ (Waterloo, Canada), PhD Econ (Mak)

MAK/VC/246/16

Monday, April 18, 2016

**Mr. Alfred Kiiza**  
PhD student-University of Pretoria

Dear Mr. Kiiza,

**Re: Letter of Permission to Conduct Your Study at Makerere University**

Thank you for your application and request to conduct a research titled **Pull-Push Factors and International Students Experience in Uganda: The Case of Two Universities**, to be conducted under a broader study on African International Student Mobility with leadership of Professors Chika Schoole (University of Pretoria in South Africa) and Jenny Lee (University of Arizona in USA).

In line with the Ugandan National Guidelines (2014) for Research involving Humans as Research Participants, I hereby grant permission for your PhD topic: **Pull-Push Factors and International Students Experience in Uganda: The Case of Two Universities** to be conducted at Makerere University as one of the case study.

All relevant documents and data that are available in the University will be made available for use in this project, subject to Makerere University rules and ethics procedures governing the carrying out of this project. Ms. Martha Muwanguzi, Head of the International Office at Makerere University is the designated officer to facilitate your work here and provide further guidance.

We look forward to the outcomes of your research, particularly proposals on how to best serve international students.

Yours sincerely,

Prof. John Ddumba-Ssentamu  
Vice Chancellor



Cc: Rev. Canon Dr. Alex Mugisha Kagume, Deputy Executive Director, National Council for Higher Education  
Chairperson, Ethics Committee, University of Pretoria  
Ms. Martha Muwanguzi, Head of International Office, Makerere University

In future correspondence please quote the reference number above

## Annexure D: Letter of permission from KIU to conduct the study



**KAMPALA  
INTERNATIONAL  
UNIVERSITY**

Ggaba Road-Kansanga.  
P.O. Box 20000, Kampala, Uganda.  
Tel: +256-414-266813, +256-414-267634  
Fax: +256-414-501974. Cel:+256-706-251084  
E-mail: admin@kiu.ac.ug,  
Website: www.kiu.ac.ug

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**OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY VICE CHANCELLOR  
RESEARCH INNOVATION AND EXTENSION**

28<sup>TH</sup> April 2016

OUR REF: KIU/DVC/06/06

Mr. Kiiza Kenneth Alfred,  
Uganda Management Institute,  
P.O BOX.20131,  
Kampala – Uganda.

Dear Mr. Kiiza,

**RE: Permission to carry out Research at Kampala International University**

I am in receipt of your request to the vice Chancellor for permission to carry out research for your PhD thesis titled " Pull – push Factors and International Students Experience in Uganda" The case of Two Universities to be Conducted at the Kampala International University as one of the case study.

Permission is here by granted to conduct this research at KIU. However, you are required to present a report of your findings to my office before your thesis defense. The Chief – Institute Research Center is duly informed of this requirement.

The Dean of Student Affairs will provide you with the relevant assistance.

Thank you.

  
Prof. George Nasinyama

**DEPUTY VICE CHANCELLOR RESEARCH INNOVATION AND EXTENSION**

Copy. VC, DVC AA, DVC F&A, Dean of Student Affairs, Chief- Institute Research Centre (UMI)

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*"Exploring Heights"*

## **Annexure E: Survey Questionnaire Instrument**

### **Survey Questionnaire**

#### **International Students in Uganda Survey**

##### **Welcome!**

Welcome to the International Students in Uganda Survey. This is the first comprehensive survey on international students in Uganda. It is anticipated that the data collected for the purposes of the study will further our understanding of international students' experiences and address the needs of current and future international students in Uganda.

You have been invited to participate because you were identified as an international student. Your participation in the survey will be strictly anonymous and no attempt at all will be made to link your identity to your responses. All answers will be kept strictly **confidential** while your participation in the study is voluntary. Your withdrawal from the study at any time will not affect your relationship with the university.

This survey will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. If you have any questions, please contact Jenny Lee at [JennyLee@arizona.edu](mailto:JennyLee@arizona.edu).

If you agree to participate, please continue.

Thank you!



## CHOOSING THIS UNIVERSITY

1. Did you apply (or consider applying) to a university in another foreign country (not Uganda or your home country)?

Yes

No

2. What country (ies)? \_\_\_\_\_

3. Was this university your first choice when applying to study abroad?

Yes

No

4. Please list your first choice.

\_\_\_\_\_

5. When choosing to study in Uganda, how important was each of the reasons listed below

	Not important	Somewhat important	Very important	Most important
(1) Better future jobs <u>in</u> my home country after education abroad	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(2) Better future jobs <u>outside</u> of my home country after education abroad	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(3) To experience Ugandan culture	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(4) To learn and <i>practise</i> the English language	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(5) Vacation away from home	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(6) Opportunity for academic research in Uganda	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(7) My professor/teacher/counsellor advised me to study in Uganda	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(8) I have family in Uganda	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(9) I have friends in Uganda	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

- (10) Political stability and safety as compared to home country
- (11)  
Others \_\_\_\_\_

**6. When choosing to study in Uganda, how important was each of the reasons in respect of Uganda and listed below?**

- |  | Not important         | Somewhat important    | Very important        | Most important        |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| (1) Uganda is geographically close to my home country  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (2) Uganda's easier visa and application procedures compared to other countries I considered | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (3) Lower cost of living compared to other countries I considered                            | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (4) Uganda is safe compared to other countries I considered.                                 | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (5) Opportunity to work while studying   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (6) Scholarship opportunity  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (7) Other _____  |                       |                       |                       |                       |

**7. When choosing this university, how important was each of the reasons below?**

- |   | Not important         | Somewhat important    | Very important        | Most important        |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| (1) Academic programme/major not available in my home country   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (2) Ethnic/cultural diversity of the campus   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (3) I was offered financial assistance  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (4) Opportunity to study/conduct research with a particular faculty member or research group at this university | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

- |   |                       |                       |                       |                       |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| (5) Courses taught in English at this university  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (6) I just wanted to study in Uganda (the campus or university did not matter)  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (7) Not accepted as my first choice   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (8) My teacher/counsellor advised me to study at this university  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (9) I was interested in a specific educational programme at this university (academic and/or extracurricular programme) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (10) Better quality of higher education as compared to my home country  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (11) Educational cost compared to other institutions in Uganda  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (12) Other _____  |                       |                       |                       |                       |

**8. To what extent did you rely on the following sources of information when choosing this university?**

- |   | Not at all            | A little              | A fair amount         | A lot                 |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| (1) Contract agreement with a university in my home country (exchange agreement between universities) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (2) Friends or family who have studied in Uganda  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (3) Internet/ brochures/advertisements  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (4) Private recruiter (I paid)  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (5) This university's recruiters (e.g. recruiting events, exhibit)                                    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (6) Counsellor/teacher/professor in home country  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (7) Professors at this university   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

- (8) Students who studied at this university
- (9) Study abroad agencies in my country

**ACADEMIC/COMMUNITY/ PERSONAL**

**9. During your stay at this university, please rate the level of difficulty that you have experienced for each category**

	1	2	3	4	5	Does not apply
	(Least difficult)				(Most difficult)	
(1) Academic life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(2) Social life (e.g. relationships with friends, professors)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(3) Personal life (e.g. feelings)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Please indicate your satisfaction with this university in each of the aspects below on a scale from 1 to 5 (Part 1)**

	1	2	3	4	5	Does not apply
	(Extremely dissatisfied)				(Extremely satisfied)	
(1) Academic resources (library, computers, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(2) International student support services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(3) Cost of education	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(4) Professors' knowledge of my home country	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(5) Extra-curricular opportunities and activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(6) Helpfulness of administrators and staff	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(7) Job preparedness for work after studying at this university	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

- |      |  |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |
|------|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| (8)  | Availability of internships and work opportunities                                   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (9)  | <b>Campus safety</b><br>Local community safety                                       | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (10) | Quality of university facilities (e.g. library, place to study)                      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (11) | Bursaries/scholarships/grants/other financial aid                                    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (12) | Technology and computer labs   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (13) | Social atmosphere (friends, activities)  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (14) | Transferring courses from other universities for academic credits at this university | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (15) | Quality of professors  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (16) | Course availability  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (17) | International student orientation at the beginning of your term                      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (18) | Overall university experience  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Please share any comments regarding your answers:

---

**11. Please indicate your satisfaction with this university in each of the aspects below on a scale from 1 to 5 (Part 2)**

- |                                  | 1<br>(Extremely dissatisfied) | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5<br>(Extremely satisfied) | Does not apply        |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| (1) On campus work opportunities | <input type="radio"/>         | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> |

- |      |  |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |
|------|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| (2)  | Personal/family safety   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (3)  | Quality of health and family support services (e.g. child care)                      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (4)  | Quality of university facilities (e.g. library, gymnasium)                           | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (5)  | Scholarships/grants/other financial aid  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (6)  | Scientific research/laboratory equipment (laboratories, technology, etc.)            | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (7)  | Social atmosphere (friends, activities)  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (8)  | Transferring courses from other universities for academic credits at this university | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (9)  | Quality of teaching staff (professors and instructors)                               | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (10) | International students' orientation at the beginning of the term.                    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (11) | University experience.   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Please comment: \_\_\_\_\_

**12. Please rate the following experiences at this university on a scale from 1 to 5**

**(1 = no difficulty to 5 = much difficulty)**

- |   | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
|   | (No difficulty)       |                       |                       |                       | (Much difficulty)     |
| (1) Acceptance by this university faculty and staff | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

- |  |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| (2) Acceptance by this university students   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (3) Advice and information given by this university's international student office | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (4) Affordable living expenses (rent, food, transportation, etc.)                  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (5) Affordability of education (tuition, supplies, etc.)                           | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (6) Availability of financial assistance   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (7) Availability of support services   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (8) Feeling comfortable in Uganda  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (9) Feeling welcome on this university campus                                      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (10) Feeling safe in Uganda  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (11) Making friends with Ugandan students  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (12) Making friends with international students                                    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (13) Making friends with students from home country                                | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (14) Academic pressure to succeed  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (15) Continuity of funding   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (16) Obtaining a visa to study in Uganda   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (17) Initial adjustment to academic life upon arrival                              | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (18) Initial adjustment to social life upon arrival                                | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (19) Initial adjustment to Ugandan culture upon arrival                            | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

**13. During your stay at this university, please rate the level of difficulty that you have experienced for each category**

1	2	3	4	5	Does not apply
(Least difficult)				(Most difficult)	

- |   |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| (1) Academic life                                 | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (2) Social life (e.g. relationships with friends) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (3) Personal life (e.g. feelings)                 | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

**14. Please rate the following experiences at this university on a scale from 1 to 5 compared to local Ugandan (not international) students.**

**(1 = no difficulty to 5 = much difficulty)**

- |   | 1                                 | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5   |
|---|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---|
|   | (Much easier than local students) |                       | (No difference)       |                       | (Much More Difficult than local students) |
| (1) Participating in class discussions                            |                                   |                       |                       |                       |   |
| Communicating in English language                                 | <input type="radio"/>             | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>                     |
| Understanding classroom culture and policies                      | <input type="radio"/>             | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>                     |
| (2) Acceptance by other university students                       | <input type="radio"/>             | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>                     |
| (3) Affordable living expenses (rent, food, transportation, etc.) | <input type="radio"/>             | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>                     |
| (4) Affordability of education (tuition, supplies, etc.)          | <input type="radio"/>             | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>                     |
| (5) Availability of financial assistance                          | <input type="radio"/>             | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>                     |
| (6) Availability of support services                              | <input type="radio"/>             | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>                     |
| (7) Feeling comfortable in Uganda                                 | <input type="radio"/>             | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>                     |
| (8) Feeling welcomed on this university campus                    | <input type="radio"/>             | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>                     |
| (9) Feeling safe in Uganda  | <input type="radio"/>             | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>                     |



- |   |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| (10) Making friends with Uganda students              | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (11) Making friends with international students       | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (12) Continuity of funding                            | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (13) Initial adjustment to academic life upon arrival | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (14) Initial adjustment to social life upon arrival   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

**SOCIAL EXPERIENCES AND DISCRIMINATION**

**15. Please indicate the backgrounds of your friends at this university (check one).**

Mostly friends from my home country

Mostly other international students

Mostly local Ugandan students

Equal number of local and international students

No friends at all

Other: Specify.

**16. Do you believe that you are treated fairly as compared to Ugandan students?**

- |  | Much worse            | Same | Much better           |
|--|-----------------------|------|-----------------------|
| (1) By classmates                                    | <input type="radio"/> |      | <input type="radio"/> |
| (2) By professors                                    | <input type="radio"/> |      | <input type="radio"/> |
| (3) By administrative staff on campus                | <input type="radio"/> |      | <input type="radio"/> |
| (4) Outside the classroom, but within the university | <input type="radio"/> |      | <input type="radio"/> |
| (5) Outside of the university                        | <input type="radio"/> |      | <input type="radio"/> |

Please explain \_\_\_\_\_

**17. Do you believe that you are treated fairly as compared to other international students?**

- |                   | Yes                   | No                    |
|-------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| (1) By classmates | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| (2) By professors | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

- (3) By administrative staff on campus
- (4) Outside the classroom, but within the university
- (5) Outside of the university
- (6) Access to jobs
- (7) Access to student support
- (8) Opportunities to help me complete degree

Please provide examples \_\_\_\_\_

**18. Do you feel physically safe in Uganda?**

- Yes
- No

Please explain \_\_\_\_\_

- (1).Do you feel socially accepted in Uganda?
- (2).Do you feel academically comfortable in Uganda?

**19. Have you been treated disrespectfully or unfairly in Uganda due to any of the following?**

	On campus	Off campus (add no)
(1) Gender	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(2) Language ability	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(3) Nationality	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(4) Race	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(5) Religion	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(7) Sexual orientation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please explain \_\_\_\_\_

**20. If you encountered discrimination at this institution, to whom would you go in order to report it? (Check all that apply)**

I would not report it

Professor

Department/programme head

University staff/administrative office

Police

I would report it but I do not know where to go

**21. Is there a process for filing any concerns or grievance you might have?**

**LEARNING OUTCOMES**

**22. Compared to when you first started at this institution, how would you now describe yourself?**

	Much weaker	Weaker	No change	Stronger	Much stronger
(1) Ability to work cooperatively	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(2) Analytical and problem solving skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(3) Computer skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(4) Academic preparation for work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(5) English language ability	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(6) General knowledge	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(7) Knowledge of particular field or discipline	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(8) Ability to understand people from different cultures/ethnicities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(9) Mathematical skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(10) Public speaking ability	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(11) Research skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(12) Academic writing skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(13) Knowledge of my own culture	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(14) Knowledge of Uganda	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**23. In your own words, please describe how your experience at this university may have impacted on your life.**

## **FUTURE PLANS**

**Please indicate your future goals for your EDUCATION**

**24. I hope to complete my current degree at (choose one):**

This institution

Another institution in Uganda

My home country

Another country (what country?)

**25. I hope to continue my future education at (choose one)**

This institution

Another institution in Uganda

My home country

Another country (what country?)

**26. I hope to work in my future career at:**

This institution

Another institution in Uganda

My home country

Another country (what country?)

## **RECOMMENDATION**

**27. Would you recommend this university to friends/family in your home country?**

Yes

No

**28. Why or why not?**

**29. What recommendations would you make to this university to improve the international students' experiences?**

## **BACKGROUND**

**30. Gender:**

- Female                       Male

**31. Primary language(s)**

**32. Citizen of which country?**

**33. Name of the city you are from (prior to Uganda)**

**34. What is your primary source of funding (choose one)?**

1. Personal/family
2. Home government
3. This university
4. Other:

**35. What is the university where you are currently enrolled?**

**36. How many semesters have you attended at this university (including this current semester)**

**37. Your first major (primary academic department) at this university**

**38. You're second major or minor at this university (if applicable)**

**39. For what type of degree programme are you enrolled at this university?**

- No degree programme (short-term exchange student)
- 3 year degree (National diploma)
- 4 year degree (Honours, Brecht)
- Post graduate (Masters, MTech, PhD, etc)
- Other

Please explain (if applicable)

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**40. Please add any comments you wish to share.**

**41. Are you willing to participate in a confidential interview to further discuss your experiences?**

Yes

No

**42. If yes please provide your email at which to contact you for the interview.**

**Thank you for your participation!**

## **Annexure F: interview protocol**

This is the first comprehensive study on international students in Uganda, led by Kiiza Kenneth Alfred, a PhD student of University of Pretoria. It is anticipated that the data collected for the study will further our understanding of international student experiences and address the needs of current and future international students in South Africa.

You have been invited to participate in the study because you were identified as an international student. Your participation in the study will be strictly anonymous while your participation in the study is voluntary. You will free to withdraw from participation in this project at any time and, should you wish to do so, know that this will not affect your status at or relationship with this university.

This interview will take approximately 30-45 minutes to complete. Do you wish to participate? Do I have permission to record this interview?

### **Choosing to study abroad and coming to this university**

1. How/why did you choose to study in Uganda?
2. How/why did you choose to study at this university (Makerere/Kampala International University)?
3. How easy or difficult was the process of applying for admission and coming to this university? Did you encounter any visa issues (i.e., study permit)?  
If you did not have a study permit, how did it affect your studies?

### **Academic life**

4. How are your classroom experiences at this university as compared to your home country?
  - (a) Classroom teaching and learning style
  - (b) Student-faculty relationship
  - (c) Academic demands/load/expectations

### **Social life**

5. Who are your friends at this university?  
What percentage of them are:
  - a) Friends from your home country?
  - b) International students from other countries?
  - c) Ugandan students?Why?
6. With which of the three groups of students do you spend the most time?  
With which of the three of students do you spend the least time?  
Why?

7. What is your opinion of the Ugandan students at this university (Makerere/Kampala International University)?
8. What could be done to improve your friendships at this university (Makerere/Kampala International University)?

### **Personal experiences**

9. What have been your greatest challenges since arriving at this university (Makerere/Kampala International University)?
10. Do you think that international students feel welcomed and comfortable at this university?
  - (a) Have you, or has any one you know, been treated disrespectfully on campus?
  - (b) Have you, or has any one you know, been treated disrespectfully off campus?
  - (c) Any experiences/stories that you have to share with me?
  - (d) If you have had a bad experiences, what do you think was the reason for your bad experience?
  - (e) Do you think it was because of racism/discrimination/xenophobia? Or do you think it was due to a difference in culture?

### **Learning outcomes**

11. What are the advantages of studying at this university (Makerere/Kampala International University)?
12. What has been the impact of your experience of studying abroad at this university (Makerere/Kampala International University)?
  - (a) How did you benefit personally?
  - (b) How did you benefit educationally or professionally?
13. Do you plan to recommend studying in Uganda or this university (Makerere/Kampala International University) to friends or family at home? Why or why not?
14. What recommendations would you make to this university (Makerere/Kampala International University) to encourage students to come to this university?
  - (a) Any recommendations to improve the services for international students at this university?
  - (b) Is there anything you would change at this university (Makerere/Kampala International University) if you could?
15. Anything else you would like to share?