Effect of student's involvement in fees policy implementation on learner's stability in public universities in Uganda: the case of Makerere University

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Abstract

The study examined the effect of student involvement/participation in fees policy implementation on learner's stability in Makerere University that has had a number of student unrests in the past whenever fees policy changes are considered for implementation resulting into a number of disruptive consequences. The study aimed at examining how student involvement/ participation in fees policy implementation affect their stability with a view of proposing strategies capable of enhancing order in the university. The study adopted a case study design in collection and analysis of data using questionnaires and interview guide from a sample of 368 consisting of students, their leaders and selected university administrators. Results indicated that there is a gap on the part of student leaders to consult extensively from their constituents because they lack advocacy and lobbying skills, management rarely put into consideration student's views while making decisions, and that protests are seen by students as a mobilization structure for airing out their voices on fees policy changes. The study concludes that the level of student involvement in fees policy implementation depends on the nature of student leadership and willingness of management to incorporate their views in decision making. The study recommends that individual student awareness and empowerment to participate in fees policy implementation is important and must be cultivated by university management and the need for capacity building on the part of student leaders to boost their representation skills.

Key words: Educational policy Implementation, Higher education costs - Sub-Saharan Africa

Introduction

Institutional stability is key for organisational performance in any sector including higher education since people are the lifeblood of any institution and for the university, these are primarily students whose stability is necessary for efficient execution of the university mandate of teaching, learning, research and innovation. Conversely, student instability has negative results like university closures, introduction of harsh measures, delay of completion of academic programmes (Kasozi, 2015). In Uganda, public universities have historically suffered student instability over policy matters since the 1950s (Kasozi 2015 & New Vision 2019) putting to question whether implementation of such policies takes into account the voices of key stakeholders (students). This study therefore sought to examine how student involvement in fees policy implementation can help avoid instability in public universities in Uganda and Makerere

University chosen because it has had numerous student unrests whenever changes in fees policy is implemented resulting into disruption of learning activities.

Students have historically had deep suspicion of higher education institutions which they perceive as centres of bureaucracy, and thus needed to assert their social role in order to get management listen to their concerns. For example, in 1966 City College of New York students demanded increase in their decision making in campus politics due to inadequate involvement in decisions that affect their stay in college. Other student movements include demonstrations in Germany which led to a policy on free public university education while protracted student protests in Chile caused major education reforms and rolling-back of the tuition fees policy (Altbach & Klemencic, 2014). Regionally, student unrest in Africa became widespread in the 1970s and 1980s with major protests occurring in 29 African countries (Kiboiy, 2013). More protests occurred from 1980 to 1989 in response to new World Bank/ International Monetary Fund higher education reforms, particularly introduction of cost sharing policies.

Nationally, Uganda's independence in 1962 ushered in new policies aimed at social, economic and political transformation, with more government investment in higher education (Marcucci, Johnstone, & Ngolovoi, 2008). Government provided free University education to students who met the criteria but this trend changed by the late 1980s. There was then need for new revenue sources to support provision of quality education for eligible students, amidst the newly imposed higher education reforms allover Africa. Consequently, the dual-track fees policy was initiated at Makerere University in 1992, under which students who meet the merit-based minimum requirements are Government funded and others who qualify can pay their own fees. While the policy is predominant in both regional and global public universities, its evolution and implementation continue to challenge institutional stability with students contesting its utility and legitimacy. Indeed, Kasozi (2015) notes that in cases where Government typically paid the greater portion of higher education fees, the introduction of/or increment in fees or any other kind of cost sharing becomes a contentious issue.

The 2016 Visitation Committee on Makerere University noted that students were highly discontented with respect to the fees policy and that the University experienced student unrest following the pronouncement to implement fees policy changes. The Committee ranked policy formulation processes and dissemination methods, as well as policy rejection as the two top causes of student discontent. Policy making is thus crucial in enhancing institutional stability and necessitates the contextualised involvement of all concerned parties. Thus, the study sought understanding of the relationship between fees policy implementation and student stability at Makerere University with a view of devising solutions that can support her long-term institutional stability.

Theory

The study was guided by the Political Process Theory advanced by Doug McAdam (1982) whose theory asserts that social movements are political and aimed at resolving legitimate grievances rather than psychological phenomena and that while a few may control the wealth of power in the political sphere, excluded groups have capacity to bring about structural change. The theory identifies three key elements that shape the behavior of actors: political opportunities/ threats, organisation and cognitive liberation. However, the study focused on the political opportunities/ threats that are events or broad social processes that serves to undermine calculations and assumptions on which the political establishment is structured. This element aided understanding of the aspects of fees policy implementation that influence student

stability, and therefore provide opportunities/ threats that lead to seeking change among students who feel disgruntled by their university management.

Problem Statement

Student stability is indispensable for success of educational institutions and the reverse threatens their administrative and academic efficiency, as well as institutional reputation. Semata (2019) and Kafeero (2019) note the endless strikes at Makerere University over the past years, citing unfair and oppressive fees policies among the causes. Indeed, a high incidence of student instability over fees at Makerere is reported by Mande & Nakayita (2015), with noted protests in 2009, 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014. This recurrent instability has had negative outcomes like property destruction, violence, university closure, delay of completion of academic schedules and delayed higher education reform (Kasozi, 2015). Notably, appropriate policy involving exhaustive consultation is necessary for stability of universities (Kiboiy, 2013). Makerere University is cognizant of this as evidenced by its approval of an independent review by a Special Guild Committee to inform proposed tuition increment in 2018. The study therefore examined the gap between intent and outcome of fees policy implementation and its effect on student stability in Makerere University that has had perennial student unrests whenever fees policy changes are considered by management. The study was conducted to establish the effect of student consultations in fees policy implementation, assessing the effect of student representation in fees policy implementation, and examining the effect of student mobilization structures in fees policy implementation on student stability in Makerere University, Uganda.

Conceptual Framework

This section illustrates the assumed effect of student involvement in fees policy implementation on their stability in Makerere University taken as the case study.
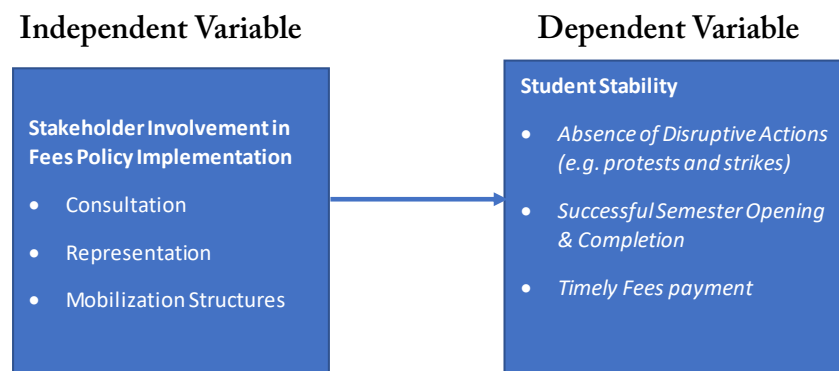

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework indicating the relationship between involvement in fees policy implementation and student stability (Source: Researcher developed based on Doug McAdam's Political Process Theory, 1982).

Figure 1 illustrates the relationship between involvement in fees policy implementation and student stability among public universities in Uganda. The independent variable (involvement in fees policy implementation) is measured in terms of (consultation, representation, and mobilization structures) assumed to have a significant relationship to the dependent variable measured in terms of (absence of disruptive actions, timely regular semester opening and completion, & timely fees payment). From the assumed relationship above, the study hypothesized that involvement in fees policy implementation has a significant relationship to student stability among public universities in Uganda.

Literature Review

Fees are a concern of students worldwide against which they have collectively protested as proven by the Fees Must Fall movement in South Africa, Côte d'Ivoire, Burundi and Kenya (Raghurama, Breinesa & Gunterb, 2020). At the heart of the movement is the call for free education, with students arguing that education is an entitlement and not a commodity (Langa, 2017). On the other hand, university management is not in position to meet the demands for free education because of increasingly insufficient funding from government. This situation presents questions around the definition of the traditional university as a provider of public education on an egalitarian, affordable and accessible basis. Indeed, the idea that higher education is an economic good aimed at reducing inequity and advancing development has made fees policies a topical matter and the cause of continuing student discontent.

Consequentially, universities dubbed as "public" remain challenged on how they can legitimately restructure their administrative and financial systems to meet the overall cost of higher education provision, while ensuring student stability. This can only be achieved with support of all stakeholders (government, parents and students), who must be convinced to pay higher fees for quality higher education in line with increasing costs of living (Kasozi, 2015). A starting point would be the recognition that students should be involved in the management of their institutions, and should be aware of the reasons behind implementation of policies that affect their welfare. This is especially important because university students are highly conscious of their immediate social and political environment, which places them in the unique position to demand for democratic spaces and accountability in the management of public matters (Kiboiy, 2013). It also means that the management of public universities should avoid centralised decision making and actions that do not take into consideration the internal and external operational environment.

Brown (2017) notes that public participation in policy making and subsequently in governance processes at higher educational institutions is achieved through collective student action. This involves the use of existing student leadership structures (Guild and GRC) to engage with university management at formal institutional (e.g., Council and Senate) meetings, through which system the general student voice and agency is supposed and expected to be relayed. The matter of representation (collective student action) is however complicated and yet highly relevant in understanding the extent of students' involvement in policy making processes.

Mugume (2015) argues that the autonomy, competence and commitment of the representative to the interests of the represented is very important, and that the represented must be involved in policy processes in whichever way possible. It is observed, however, that there is a general trend for student instability to occur and intensify during the tenure of zealous, idealistic and non-compromising leaders. Some student leaders work through confrontational approaches, while others may not be aware of the structures through which to make their case, and still others believe that due to their limited number on key decision-making organs, their views do not count. Indeed, most student instability at Makerere University coincides with the students' guild electoral cycle.

On the other hand, unexperienced leaders cannot ably perform the representative role. Kiboiy (2013) points out that poor student leadership and management styles contribute to the communication gap where university management remain largely unaware of critical issues that are of concern even while

elaborate structures to facilitate effective student representation on critical decision-making bodies of the university exist. It is thus important that student leaders as representatives of the student body are adequately empowered to participate in policy processes through capacity building to gain knowledge and leadership competencies. There should be clarity on the tasks and expectations of the representative role, as well as guidance on how they can achieve balance and negotiate mutually beneficial outcomes for their constituencies and the university as an entity.

Effective representation of the student voice requires processes, mechanisms and networks that are not only inclusive but well institutionalised in order to enable sustainable and independent deliberations, as well as foster self mobilisation (Klemencic & Park, 2018). Structured student representation on departmental committees is argued to be a very strategic and useful participatory mechanism (Lizzio & Wilson, 2009). Therefore, the student mobilisation structures through which their involvement in fees policy implementation takes place should exist at the local decentralised student level and the centralised institutional level. The potential of this mechanism rests on the effectiveness of student self mobilisation and subsequent representation in a well institutionalised and independent bottom-up structure. For this study, it was important to understand how the existing hybrid structure works to enable effective involvement of students in fees policy implementation.

Methodology

The study was conducted using a mixed method approach that applied both quantitative and qualitative methods in collection and analysis of data. A case study design was adopted to enable detailed contextual analysis of the research problem with a focus on Makerere University. The cases were defined within the dimensions of the conceptual framework as existing in public universities in Uganda, with specific focus on their prevalence. Makerere University was selected because it is the oldest, largest and premier public university in Uganda with perennial student instability amidst fees policy implementation.

The study population included undergraduate continuing students, student leaders, and selected university administrators. According to Makerere University Fact Book 2018-2019 a total of 30,863 undergraduate students enrolled into various programmes in the ten (10) Colleges in the 2018/2019 academic year. The study targeted the College of Humanities and Social Sciences that covers a wide selection of courses of the Arts comprising of 6382 students and the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences with a total of 2005 students to represent the sciences because it is more holistic with courses covering the major branches of science (physical, earth & life). Overall, the target population (N) comprised of 8387 students, 38 student leaders, and 19 university administrators from where a sample size of 368 was derived using Krejcie and Morgan Table for Sample Size Determination (Amin, 2005). Both students and their leaders answered a questionnaire whereas the key informants (university administrators) were interviewed. Quantitative data was analysed with the use of descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages and means) and content analysis used for qualitative data.

Findings

This section presents the empirical findings of the study generated from the samples population consisting of students, their leaders and university administrators identified as key informants.

Effect of student consultations in fees policy implementation on stability in Makerere University

The study sought to establish the effect of student consultations in fees policy implementation on stability at Makerere University whose results are summarized in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Students' Responses on consultations in Fees Policy Implementation

Items on contribution to fees policy content and process	Response (%)						
	SA	A	SLA	SLD	D	SD	Mean
My school life is affected by lack of involvement in the fees policy making process	35.7%	35.7%	11. 6%	3.9%	7.5%	5.6%	5.28
Implementation of the fees policy without consultation is the major cause of student protests at the university	51.0%	28.0%	9.7%	2.7%	5.0%	3.6%	5.63
Academic activities of the University are greatly affected by lack of student engagement which leads to protests	39.5%	29.0%	8.8%	6.2%	7.7%	8.8%	4.40
The University administration considers and adopts students' views regarding fees policy changes and implementation	22.7%	22.8%	9.2%	6.1%	12.8%	26.4%	3.57
Average Mean							4.72

Note. SA is Strongly Agree (6), A – Agree (5), SLA – Slightly Agree (4), SLD – Slightly Disagree (3), D – Disagree (2) while SD is Strongly Disagree (1). Source: Field Data (April, 2021)

Results in Table 1 indicate that majority of students responded in the affirmative regarding their school life being affected by lack of involvement in the fees policy making process (83%) while 88.7% believed that implementation of the fees policy without consultation is the major cause of student protests at the University; 77.3% agreed that academic activities of the university are greatly affected by lack of student engagement which leads to protests and 54.7% opined that the university administration considers and adopts their views regarding fees policy changes and implementation indicating that whereas they are consulted a good number remained sceptical (45.3%). An average Mean of (M=4.72) further illustrate that students are not fully engaged on matters regarding fees policy changes at the University. The views of students are not far apart from those of their leaders as presented in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Student Leaders Responses on being consulted in Fees Policy Implementation

Items on contribution to fees policy content and process	Response (%)						
	SA	A	SLA	SLD	D	SD	Mean
The major cause of student unrest is lack of consultation on the fees policy	66.7	6.7	20.0	0.0	6.7	0.0	5.27
The university management regularly consults me on fees policy implementation	0.0	0.0	13.3	6.7	20.0	60.0	1.73
My views concerning fees policy implementation are often reflected in the decisions of University management	14.3	7.1	14.3	7.1	14.3	42.9	2.71
Academic activities of the university (like semester opening, teaching, learning and examinations) are greatly affected by student protests	13.3	26.7	26.7	6.7	20.0	6.7	3.87
Inadequate involvement in fees policy making is among, the major cause of student unrest	26.7	13.3	40.0	0.0	6.7	13.3	4.13
Average Mean							3.54

Note. SA is Strongly Agree (6), A – Agree (5), SLA – Slightly Agree (4), SLD – Slightly Disagree (3), D – Disagree (2) while SD is Strongly Disagree (1). Source: Field Data (April, 2021)

Student leaders upheld findings in Table 1 with 93.4% agreeing that the major cause of student unrest was lack of consultation on the fees policy and 87% affirming that they were not regularly consulted by university management on fees policy implementation. In addition, 64% of student leaders reported that their views were rarely reflected in decisions of management. Overall, the results show that students' stability is highly influenced by their perception of the level of consultation in the fees policy implementation process. The average Mean of (M=3.54) further indicate that student leaders remained skeptical about being involved in fees policy implementation in the university and this explains why there are rampant student unrests.

Interview Results from University Administration

Most of the University Officials interviewed reported that students were appropriately involved in fees policy making processes through engagement of their leaders at various levels, which opinion is comprehensively represented by the following direct quote from participant one:

> The students are represented at all levels of the fees debate. At the Hall/ College level, there is a Guild Representative Council; elected by and among the students; then there is the Student's Guild with various positions of student leadership. At Management level, there is a student representative to the University Senate, and ultimately, the Guild President is the student representative to the University Council. With this structure, students discuss fees issues through: Collection of memoranda; Discussion of student views at Guild, Senate and Council levels; Feedback to students and; Most importantly, periodic review of the fees policy…

The above quotation shows that there are established institutional avenues through which the student voice is supposed to be heard. The assumption on the side of University officials is that the represented views arise out of consultation processes between the student leaders and their constituents. Interesting to note is an assertion by one of the University officials that "Their involvement in Senate and Council is not representative enough; it does not represent views of all students." The implication is that despite the established avenues of student involvement, they are not sufficient to capture the entire student voice. On why the University continues to suffer student discontent/protests in response to fees policy implementation efforts, University officials provided more insight as follows:

> Excerpt 1; It is because the University is a Government Institution operating as a pseudo-Private Institution, (agreeably to increase revenue, meet operational costs, and be financially autonomous.) Students know this and tend to take advantage of the founding ideology of Makerere: a university meant to increase access to higher education, accommodate the bright but "poor or disadvantaged students", and is funded or subsidised by Government. If this is true, then why the pressure to pay fees? I guess it's the question in the mind of students, and the reason why they protest.
> Excerpt 2; "… the value for money aspects can't be ignored… the students on the other hand demand improved services in terms of teaching space, lecturer commitment, book banks, cleanliness and hygiene in halls of residence, ICT facilities, lighting on campus, etc. (Implementing fees policy but where does our money go? asks the students!)"

Excerpts 1 and 2 above reveal that there is more at play with regard to student stability at Makerere University than the reported lack of involvement in fees policy implementation. The perceived traditional role of a public university as a provider of affordable and accessible higher education as well as the

expectation of better services amidst rising fees are considered by University officials as major factors in student instability. Nonetheless, consultation in terms of contribution to the fees policy content and process was still highlighted as being related to student stability. One university official stated that "… when feedback is received and not considered, the students go on strike and the University listens!"

Effect of student representation in fees policy implementation on stability in Makerere University
This section presents findings on the effect of student representation in fees policy implementation on learner's stability at Makerere University. Results are summarized in Table 3 below:

Table 3: Student Leaders Responses on representation in Fees Policy Implementation

Items on Representation (Capacity and Empowerment)	Response (%)						
	SA	A	SLA	SLD	D	SD	Mean
Student leaders receive regular training in leadership and advocacy skills	10.2	6.7	26.7	6.7	13.3	46.7	2.33
It is important to ensure a right balance between students' opinions and institutional needs when discussing fees policy	66.7	20.0	6.7	0.0	0.0	6.7	5.33
The Guild Executive has an effective working relationship with university management	7.7	30.8	30.8	15.4	0.0	15.4	3.85
Upon assumption of my leadership position, I received orientation on the tasks and expectations of this role	25.0	41.7	8.3	0.0	0.0	25.0	4.17
I am a member of at least one institutional policy making body/ organ	15.4	38.5	0.0	7.7	23.1	15.4	3.69
The institutional fees policy making setting is conducive for effective negotiation in line with students' expectations	20.0	0.0	13.3	0.0	6.7	60.0	2.47
My voice as a student leader has some impact in the making of fees policy	25.0	8.3	25.0	0.0	8.3	33.3	3.42
Average Mean							3.60

Note. SA is Strongly Agree (6), A – Agree (5), SLA – Slightly Agree (4), SLD – Slightly Disagree (3), D – Disagree (2) while SD is Strongly Disagree (1). Source: Field Data (April, 2021)

Table 3 reveal that 56.4% of the respondents disagreed about receiving regular training in leadership and advocacy skills, implying that they don't have the capacity to ably represent student issues in senate and University Council with 66.7% also indicating that the institutional fees policy making is conducive for effective negotiation in line with student expectations. This shows that student expectations regarding fees policy changes is not well catered for by their leaders. However, they agreed about ensuring a balance between student opinions and institutional needs, having an effective working relationship with management, receiving orientation on expected roles, and their voice having impact in fees making policy. These findings give the indication that whereas management has put in place mechanisms to involve student leaders in fees policy changes and implementation, they (student) leaders are not effectively doing their work either because they lack negotiation and lobbying skills or they do not consult extensively with their constituents before meeting management as reflected with the average Mean of (M=3.60).

Interview results
Two varying opinion on the representation capacity and empowerment of student leaders were noted from the key informants (university officials) as illustrated by the excerpts below:

Excerpt 1; "The Office of Dean of Students provides orientation/induction for new leaders, during which other university officials including the Academic Registrar are invited to talk to them. The Guild Cabinet are also involved during orientation week for first year students with the aim of giving them opportunity to talk to their fellow students and impart necessary information related to their academics and welfare." Excerpt 2; ""Empowering" student leaders? Not quite. Empowerment would involve a lot. At best, the student leaders are given policy agendas especially on matters that concern students, at various levels (Halls, Colleges, Schools, or Guild) …"

Excerpt 1 indicates some level of capacity building for student leaders. However, it is observable that there are only two regular programmes for this; once during induction of new leaders and during orientation week for fresh students. Excerpt 2 highlights the inadequacy of existing capacity building efforts as they do not ably empower student leaders. Further interesting to note, majority of university officials indicated student politics as a major hindrance to effective representation of student interests. The quote below speaks to the nature of student representation:

"… And at a certain point, students who make "kavuyo" become the leaders. These leaders are boosted and sponsored by people to cause havoc- part of politics. Some students have hooliganism in themselves, and think only of strikes. They prefer using force, and expect the University to only say yes to their demands. They do not care whether their popularity is on negative or positive side. Even then outsiders fuel the strikes because it covers them looting peoples' things and destroying property."

The above quotation portrays limits to the efficacy of student representation with regard to their involvement in fees policy implementation. Additionally, the University Officials noted the need to improve the student leadership transition process with one University official stating:

"This is because there are always different student governments and there is no proper transition/ handover to ensure continuity of previous ideas and decisions of student representatives. For instance, each Guild Cabinet comes with its own perspectives…"

The above statement shows poor institutional mechanisms for capacity building and empowerment of student leaders to be able to sustain longstanding policy decisions.

Effect of student mobilization structures in fees policy implementation on stability in Makerere University
The study further sought to examine the effect of student mobilization structures in fees policy implementation on learner's stability at Makerere University. Results are summarized in Table 4 below:

Table 4: Student Responses on their mobilization structures in Fees Policy Implementation in Makerere University

Student mobilisation structures							
Items	SA	A	SLA	SLD	D	SD	Mean
My College has systems dedicated to student concerns on fees policy implementation	12.2%	16.4%	9.1%	10.2%	18.7%	33.4%	2.92
Students mostly discuss fees policy issues using social media	28.2%	40.4%	17.9%	4.6%	3.8%	5.2%	4.69
I belong to an institutionally recognized student group/ organization/association	30.8%	37.8%	12.1%	4.3%	6.3%	8.7%	4.56
Individual student views are easily transmitted through the institutional channels for the University administration's attention	19.3%	30.3%	13.0%	9.6%	10.5%	17.3%	3.86
I believe that student associations provide students opportunity to share views regarding matters like fees policy implementation	20.3%	16.6%	13.0%	6.8%	15.5%	27.9%	3.35
Average Mean							3.87

Note. SA is Strongly Agree (6), A – Agree (5), SLA – Slightly Agree (4), SLD – Slightly Disagree (3), D – Disagree (2) while SD is Strongly Disagree (1). Source: Field Data (April, 2021)

Table 4 indicate that 62.3% of students disagreed on their college having systems dedicated to their concerns on fees policy implementation. 87% of the student leaders confirmed this assertion (Table 5 below). On the contrary, 62.6% of students agreed that individual student views were easily communicated through the institutional channels for the University administration's attention. This was supported by the student leaders, 73.3% who stated that they regularly interacted with student groups/associations to share policy information and receive feedback. Within the student community, mobilisation structures for discussion of fees policy issues were thus believed to be adequate. Social media was confirmed by students (86.5%) and student leaders (93%) as a major mobilisation channel through which they discuss fees policy.

It is notable that 80.7% of students belonged to an institutionally recognised student group, although only 49.9% of them believed that these bodies provided them opportunity to share views regarding fees policy implementation. Overall, the data indicates relatively good mobilisation structures on the part of students reflected by an average Mean of (M=3.87). It is also important to note that all student leaders 100% (Table 6 below) reported that protests give students an opportunity to participate in fees policy matters, which implies that they (protests) are a mobilisation tool.

Table 5: Student Leader's Responses on mobilization structures in Fees Policy Implementation in Makerere University

Items on Mobilisation Structures	Response (%)						
	SA	A	SLA	SLD	D	SD	Mean
The Colleges have systems dedicated to student concerns on fees policy implementation	6.7	0.0	6.7	0.0	26.7	60.0	1.80
I regularly interact with student groups/organisations/associations to share policy information and receive feedback	20.0	33.3	20.0	6.7	20.0	0.0	4.27
Students mostly mobilise through social media regarding fees policy issues	50.0	28.6	14.3	0.0	0.0	7.1	5.07
I believe that protests give students an opportunity to participate in fees policy matters	69.2	23.1	7.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	5.62
Average Mean							4.19

Note. SA is Strongly Agree (6), A – Agree (5), SLA – Slightly Agree (4), SLD – Slightly Disagree (3), D – Disagree (2) while SD is Strongly Disagree (1). Source: Field Data (April, 2021).

The interviews with University officials pointed to a need for further linkage between student and institutional mobilisation efforts regarding involvement in fees policy implementation. This would alleviate the use of student mobilisation structures as protest rallying avenues.

Discussion

The study results correspond with existing scholarly literature, which highlights that students' participation in the decisions that affect their welfare builds a sense of ownership and incentive to accept set rules (Mati, Gatumu & Chandi, 2016). In the absence of adequate involvement as evidenced by the reported low level of consultation in the fees policy implementation process, student stability is threatened. It is important to note that the perceived lack of consultation presents opportunity for students to seek change/go against set rules (McAdam, 1982) in various ways including protests and other forms of disruptive actions.

The findings also resonate with the Special Guild Committee (2018) report which states that University Council's previous attempts to increase fees were resisted by students because of inadequate consultation. The findings also concur with Brown (2017)'s argument that there is verified demand among students for involvement in the aims-setting process; the choice of university strategies; and the choice of actions. This is evidenced by the expressed student discontent where majority expressed that their views were rarely reflected in decisions of management. The finding that student protests are majorly caused by lack of consultation on the fees policy is in agreement with Raghurama, Breinesa & Gunterb (2020)'s assertion that fees are a concern of students worldwide against which they have collectively protested as proven by the FeesMustFall movement. It is thus evident that students expect to be included in the fees policy implementation making process, which would then build their confidence and trust in subsequent decisions and set rules.

Based on the findings, it appears that student leaders may actually not effectively represent the views of their constituents, despite existence of consultative structures and processes. Indeed, the argument that the University continues to suffer student discontent in response to fees policy implementation efforts due to student politics becomes valid. It also explains why student discontent is usually around student election cycles, and creates doubt about the commitment of some student leaders to their constituents' concerns. The study results thus portray a contrary situation to Mugume (2015)'s view of a representative who must not only be autonomous and competent, but also committed to the interests of the represented. The study findings agree with existing literature that effective representation of students' voice and agency requires processes, mechanisms and networks that are not only inclusive but well institutionalised in order to enable sustainable and independent deliberations as well as foster self mobilisation (Klemencic & Park, 2018). A high level of student mobilisation structures was observed especially through social media where students are able to organise for desired change as defined in McAdam's political process theory. Unfortunately, a disconnect was observed between student mobilisation structures and the institutional structures. Mobilisation structures can therefore be used by University officials to ensure meaningful engagement with students and dispel negative propaganda that could lead to student discord.

Conclusion
The study observes that the level of student involvement in fees policy implementation depends on the nature of student leadership and how this ensures appropriate representation of students' views in fees

policy decisions and actions. There is a gap in student leaders' capacity and empowerment to represent their views and their overall perception that university management does not consult them in fees policy implementation processes. Besides, student instability in the university seem to be politicized by their leadership and inadequate management of the student guild structure. In addition, a weak link between the students' and institutional mobilisation structures is a major hindrance to achieving shared meaning and understanding during fees policy implementation.

Recommendations

Public Universities in Uganda should rethink their mode of engagement with students as the existing model has proven ineffective. Individual student awareness and empowerment to participate in fees policy implementation processes is important and must be cultivated by university officials and student leaders for shared understanding.

Related to the above, there should be coordination between student and institutional mobilisation efforts regarding involvement in fees policy implementation. Effective use of mobilisation structures would require capacity building for student leaders as representatives of the student body to enable them balance their roles and expectations.

The leadership of public universities should also maintain close interactions with student leaders across all levels and not only the Students' Guild Executive. The interactions would also provide opportunity for University management to ensure smooth transition of different student governments where continuity of previous decisions and ideas are legitimised.

The Guild Offices should be administered by an institutionally appointed Secretariat to ensure day-to-day guidance, consistency and permanency of documentation, as well as smooth transition between student governments which happens annually.

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