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**TITLE: THE MYTH AND REALITY BEHIND THE AXIOLOGICAL STANCES IN  
AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES. A CASE STUDY OF UGANDAN UNIVERSITIES.**

**The problem of values in the University context:**

The question or problem of axiology (values) is of pivotal concern to philosophers of education. It is problematic because it is manifested, implied, not tangible and not necessarily experiential. It crops up everywhere in the University education system; in and out side pedagogical arenas. (Kneller 1971; Nsereko-Munakukaama 1997 and Kigongo 1994)). Ignoring values transmitted in the different universities would imply ignoring who the university student is (his/her character and world out look)

Under normal (ideal ) circumstances values transmitted in a specific educational institution are implied ( edified ) in the mission, vision or purported philosophy behind the institution. Unfortunately these in many universities are not known by most salient stake-holders( Muwagga 2006), probably this could be the partial explanation for the axiological disfunctionality in the behavior of some university students as revealed in The New Vision October 2001 pg. 29 vol. 16; Monitor July, 29<sup>th</sup> 2001; Monitor July 30<sup>th</sup> 2001 pg. 30; Monitor July 31<sup>st</sup> 2001 pg. 12. Kasibante and Kiwanuka (2001) observe that the element of commercialization can not be ruled out in Uganda's educational context at all levels this has had a significant impact on the nature of values transmitted by the different educational institutions.

Values in the educational context can be defined as an end towards which man aspires or that, which remains after the pedagogical and non pedagogical experience. In this paper Values are classified into four main categories.

- i) Material values: these are values, which have an economic utility.
- ii) Social/Public values: these are moral and ethical values, which can be social or public.
- iii) Personal values: these are values, which benefit the individual to the exclusion

of others, for example the intellectual and aesthetic values. These could be egoistic or altruistic.

- iv) Religious values; these are values which are edified in theistic traditions and practices.

According to (Kneller, 1971; Aiftinca 2004; Lee 2001 and Kigongo 1994), axiology (values) is a very vital component in analyzing education. It goes beyond mere speculation about values. It is an extensive domain of philosophy which also deals with ethics (the nature of good and evil, the problem of human conduct and man's ultimate objective or “end”

The study findings in this paper are in response to three research questions poised to the different University students in the three main university paradigms in Uganda namely; denominational/religious Private Moral-Spiritual universities (PMSU), Commercial/For –Profit and Social/Public Universities in Uganda. Students were chosen because they are the immediate and direct University inputs and out puts.

- i) What values are directly and indirectly transmitted or accessed in your university?
- ii) Do students know the values transmitted in the different Universities?
- iii) How are values transmitted or accessed in the different universities?

### **Values transmitted/accessed in the different Universities in Uganda**

The different (students) respondents were asked their views about the values transmitted in their respective universities and the following revelations were made: The students in Public/Government owned universities (PG) indicated that these universities transmit material-economic values this view was held by 118 (51.3%), while 10(4.3%) maintained that social –public values are transmitted, 95(41.3%) personal values and 7(3%) spiritual/religious values are transmitted. On the other hand students in Private Moral-Spiritual universities (PMSU) revealed that their university transmits mainly the spiritual/religious and moral values. They also revealed that other values are not very substantial in their university curriculum and context. Students in Private Commercial /For profit universities (PC/FPU) also revealed that For profit universities mainly

transmit material/economic values. These findings are supplemented by the study findings in Table 1

**Table 1: Students response to the question (What values do you think are transmitted or accessed in the different universities in Uganda?)**

University category	Responses on the nature of Values accessed by the university students				Total
	Material-Economic values	Social - public values	Personal values	Spiritual/ Religious Values	
Public/Government owned University (PG) Univ. A and B	118(51.3%)	10(4.3%)	95(41.3%)	7(3%)	230(100%)
Private Moral-Spiritual universities (PSMU) Univ. C, D and E	6(5%)	56(40%)	-	76(55%)	138(100%)
Private Economic/For- Profit (C/FP) Univ. F	84(91%)	-	8(9%)	-	92(100)
Total	208(90%)	123(53%)	46(10%)	83(18%)	460(100%)

N=460

The revelations in Table 1, are supported with findings from the focus group discussions. For example, one Student in one of the Public universities said:

*In our university the values you get are not very much determined by what is given to you by the university, but by what you are or what you allow yourself to be while at the university*

This was re-echoed by fifty nine percent of the sampled students. The majority of them (80%) in the focus group discussions revealed that there is a kind of “laissez-faire” attitude as far as what values students access. They suggested that public universities seem not to mind how students behave so long as they pass examinations and are not in breach of peace.

On the other hand, students in the moral spiritual universities revealed that most

values prevalent in their university edify or foster virtues such as integrity, honesty, openness, service above self, respect for one self and others and social justice. One student revealed that;

*“The issue of values is part and parcel of their every day life in and out side class.”*

The findings also reveal that students in Commercial/For-Profit universities are not very comfortable with issues of values. One student in this University paradigm revealed that values are not an issue both in and out side class. She lamented that their university does not implicitly or explicitly try to instill particular values in the students save the counter values which students access as a result of the limitless freedom.

### **Students’ knowledge of Values accessed in their respective Universities**

After ascertaining that the issue of values was both a myths and reality in the different universities the study sought to ascertain if the students knew the values they access in their respective universities. The study wanted to explore in detail, whether the different universities explicitly transmit or make known the values transmitted to the specific students.

Findings from Public/Government owned universities (PG) indicate that 113(49%) of the student sample knew, while 117(51%) did not have any knowledge of the values accessed in their university. From the Private Moral/Spiritual universities (PSMU) the study results indicate that 115(83%) of the student sample knew and 23(17%) did not know the values transmitted in their university. On the other hand from the Private Economic/For profit universities (PEU/FPU), it was revealed that 31(34%) knew while 61(66%) did not know the values transmitted in their university. These above findings are supplemented by findings in Table 2.

**Table 2: Students response to the question (Do you know the nature of values transmitted in your University?)**

Nature of University	Responses on the students knowledge of values accessed in the different universities		Total
	Yes	No	
Public/Government owned university (PG) Univ. A and B	113(49%)	117(51%)	230(100%)
Private moral-Spiritual (PSMU) Univ. C, D and E	115(83%)	23(17%)	138(100%)
Private Economic/For Profit Universities (C/FP)	31(34%)	61(66%)	92(100%)
Total	259(56%)	201(44%)	460(100%)

N=460

**The means through which the values are transmitted or accessed in the different universities in Uganda.**

After establishing whether students knew and the nature of values transmitted in the different universities, the paper also presents findings generated in response to the auxiliary research question: “*How are values transmitted in your university?*” The study findings reveal that it is mainly the Private Moral-Spiritual universities (PSMU), which have explicit ways through which the purported values are transmitted or accessed. Out of the 138 (100%) Private moral-Spiritual University (PSMU) interviewed student respondents, 115 (83%), revealed that there is a well laid down philosophy behind any University program. The philosophy guides the character and purpose of the University which in turn is directly or indirectly passed on the Unsuspecting or suspecting students. Students in a focus group discussions and interviews revealed a number of techniques used in the transmission of the different values in the Private Moral-Spiritual universities (PSMU).

They include the following;

- i) The nature of the lecturers teaching in the university, as a matter of principle

though implicitly have to belong to the faith of the founding body.

- ii)* The academic programs are quite often spiced with the theistic doctrine of the founding body. This was very evident in the Catholic and Islamic theistic rooted universities.
- iii)* Before any activity academic or non- academic is began, a prayer is said but within the faith pertinent to the University philosophy, for example the findings indicate that in the Islamic theistic rooted university lecturer as a directive have to greet the students with the Islamic greeting “Asalaam Aleikum walahamatullai Wabarakatuh”
- iv)* Eligibility to student leadership in most of these universities leans on faith.
- v)* All female students in the Islamic oriented universities are to dress in ways acceptable to the founders’ faith.
- vi)* Most of the literature (journals, magazines, news papers, text books and other literary work), dominantly lean on the faith of the founding body. This transmits the philosophy of the university.
- vii)* In the Islamic theistic university it was revealed that Arabic and Islamics is compulsory for all post graduate students.
- viii)* It was also revealed that in some universities girls are made to request for permission before going off campus. This is the case in the Islamic rooted university.
- ix)* They also revealed that in the Islamic theistic tradition universities there emphasis of separation of students according to sexes. That is in class or while on any part of the main campus, male students are never allowed to walk or sit together with the female students. Saturdays are free and days of rest, there is no teaching or any other manual activity. They further revealed that there is a special time for prayer every Tuesday
- x)* They also revealed that in some of these universities especially those in the Catholic theistic tradition, portraits of saints and other religious icons are evidently placed in vintage places.

On the other hand all the interviewed students both in the Public and For Profit Universities revealed that there no explicit means to transmit particular values in their

universities. They also revealed that because of that vacuum many students access counter values. (Such as greed, academic fraud, disrespectfulness and sexual promiscuity)

### **Discussion and issues arising from the study**

The study findings reveal that there are two main categories of values accessed or transmitted in the different universities in Uganda. They include material/corporeal and spiritual values. The different respondents revealed that whereas Private Moral-Spiritual universities (PSMU) have specific explicit and implicit means through which these values are transmitted, the public/government owned and the Economic/For-Profit universities (PG and C/FP) have none. The findings imply that there is an axiological vacuum created by the lack of official explicit values transmitted by the public and For-Profit universities in Uganda. The axiological void makes most of the public university academic and non-academic context a recipe for many counter values such as; greed, academic fraud, disrespectfulness and sexual promiscuity, excessive search for corporeal ends and recourse to hedonistic tendencies. These study results concur with the findings of (Nsereko, 1997; Akankwasa 1997 and Akankwasa(2002) who revealed that a constrained axiological stance ipso facto constrained academic and non academic environment can never facilitate educative education. The above scenario cements the contention that University axiological stances boarder to a myth and reality.

The findings also reveal that Public and the For-Profit universities lay too much emphasis on the corporeal nature of the university inputs and outputs. This has led the learner to be treated as a mere jug to be filled with any knowledge so long as it is acceptable to the giver. This has reduced the learner to a level of a “mollusk’ that is a being which is not capable of making critical independent decisions. This is well illustrated in the nature of the examination regimes in most of these universities which call for duplication of lecture notes or what the professors says. (This concurs with the findings of, (Akankwasa 1997 and Nsereko-Munakukaama 1997 )

This constrained and void axiological stance could be a recipe for either authentic or inauthentic living. There is a fear that some students may develop a wrong concept of

“freedom.” The majority of the students in most cases join universities after leaving in a strict home and school environment. Therefore entering the University means attaining a new world of untold freedom. The entry into an environment of total freedom alludes to what Jean–Paul Sartre called “dreadful freedom” (Stroll and Popkin 1979:436-438). The study findings imply that many students unfortunately find themselves in a similar situation. There are no bonds, time tables or well dictated laws, no prefects or guides to direct the student in the incoming event. Discussions with students revealed that some students end up into total confusion because of the unbound freedom. This has led many into a state of “freedomism”. This is a tendency of feeling that one can do what he/she wants at any time without any outstanding constraint. This is a result of most university education focusing on the material end of man; the spiritual end has been ignored. This conclusion concurs with the findings of Guissan(2001) who revealed that the ultimate end of education should be introducing students to the total reality about the mundane and the metaphysical reality.

The over emphasis of the material and corporeal reality ignores man's duality, namely the corporeal and spiritual. Such a revelation runs counter to Kasozi (2002) findings, which try to indicate that liberalization has elevated the university education in Uganda. The study findings about the public and the For-Profit university education reveal that the current education seems to be pushing man into abstract rationalism.( one without an axiological anchor)

The growth of religious based universities/The private spiritual-moral universities (PSMU) also called mission universities has had positive axiological effect on the entire university education in Uganda. That is the issue of ethical values, which had been disregarded for most of post-colonial Uganda has been rejuvenated. This concurs with the findings of (Kigongo 1998; Lejeune, 1998 and Lejeune 1999).

However, the role of the theistic universities has had some favorable philosophical implications, especially in the axiological and metaphysical disposition of the university outputs and inputs. The emphasis of a specific theistic position and the exclusion of others could in the long run fragment the already disjointed Ugandan society. It could cultivate values, which are suspect and are with far reaching axiological implications. For example there is the danger of the growth of individualism as a result of

personal initiative in almost every thing (especially in open/distance education programs).

## **Conclusion**

The findings and discussion draw us to a conclusion that there is an axiological vacuum in most Universities in Uganda. The axiological void makes most of university academic and non-academic context constrained. This leads us to ask a question “Is it possible to have a secular university (non-denominational) transmitting non denominational values/ethics?” We also can’t fail to ask “Can products which do not know what they have got transmit it?”

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