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## Factors Influencing Unequal Cross Border Higher Education Students' Mobility in East African Community

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**Abstract:** Education is now widely recognized as a scarce commodity but whose investment leads to future pecuniary and non pecuniary returns. Individuals invest in human capital (HC) with hope for future returns, while family investments expect social returns. Indeed governments in the East African Community (EAC) are motivated by the perceived social rate of returns. An emerging school of thought holds that Higher Education (HE) is a big business whose investment must be carefully planned. In EAC, cross border movement in search for HE has been to say the least, the most unequal. In her own admission, Kenya's Minister of Foreign Affairs stated that the country loses over ksh 2 billion annually in students' mobility to Uganda in search for HE. While this has gone on for years unabated, this study interrogates the central question: why is cross border HE students' mobility in EAC unequal? The study generates a four tier typology of integration that includes (i) stagnant integration (LL), (ii) moribund integration (LH), (iii) synergistic integration (HL) and (iv) inequitable integration (HH) based on the relationship between students' HE mobility and levels of inequality. Overall, the study advocates for the synergistic type of integration that encourages higher students' mobility with lower inequalities. The study was done as a spatial variation based on the concept of extreme case selection and the most likely condition. Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Rwanda were seen as influential cases to be included in the study. Uganda was seen as the destination point for cross border students movement, while Kenya and Rwanda were the exit points. An extensive but selective review of existing literature was also done as well as modest collection of primary data which was done prior to the research visit. Greater premium was placed on empirical data and government reports. Quality appraisal strategy adapted was in line with the central research question in the initial proposal. Heterogeneity of included studies, the likely impact of bias and the applicability of the findings were also addressed. Inequitable cross border students' movement is a product of many interrelated factors. The dominance of cross border students in Uganda's tertiary institutions was largely attributable to the relatively lower cost of higher education in Uganda. However, varied tuition fees charged by HE institutions in EAC was a product of different corporate tax regimes instituted by partner states with Kenya and Tanzania registering the highest corporate tax regimes while Uganda and Rwanda had the lowest. Overall, the study established that asymmetries in systems of education practiced in EAC has disadvantaged Kenya as a destination of students mobility in search of HE. Students in Uganda and Tanzania, upon sitting their Advanced level examinations, expect to complete their basic university education in 3 years. Studying in Kenya, Rwanda or Burundi, would mean they are subjected to a 4 year curriculum and this would lead to unnecessary increase in duration and total costs. In the short run, universities in Kenya should consider reducing tuition fees in order to stem students' movement to Uganda and possibly attract students from other countries in the region, however, in the long run, the EAC member states may need to establish a more comprehensive strategy to equalize tuition fees. To achieve this it may involve establishment of equalized taxation measures for education in the region. The reality is that EAC requires a unified system of education be it the 7-4-2-3 system or the 8-4-4 system of education. This idea is alluded to by article 102(e) of the EAC Treaty which requires partner states to harmonize curricular, examination and certification.

**Keywords:** Cross border; Mobility; Equalize taxation; Higher education; Unified system of education.

## 1. The Research Issue

Education is now widely recognized as a scarce commodity but whose investment leads to future pecuniary and non pecuniary returns (Psacharopoulos and Woodhall, 1985; Shultz, 1963). Individuals invest in education with hope for future private returns, while family investments are motivated by expected private and social returns. Indeed governments in the EAC are equally motivated by the perceived social rate of returns in the investment in HE. Emerging school of thought hold that education is a big business whose investment must be carefully planned (Odebero, 2011).

In EAC, cross border movement in search of HE in neighbouring economies has been to say the least, the most unequal. In her own admission, Kenya’s Minister of foreign affairs stated that the country loses over 2 billion annually in students mobility to Uganda in search of HE and added that, there are already more than 40,000 Kenyan students enrolled in Ugandan universities and other educational institutions outside (Kimani, 2010; Mutai, 2010). Tanzania has also recorded a significant number of Kenyan students in its universities. However, the number of foreign students seeking admission in Kenya has been quite low compared to the numbers seeking admission outside the country. Available information indicate that Uganda seem to attract more foreign students from all the EAC states. If this is left to obtain, it will result into a huge imbalance in benefits arising from educational exchange in favour of receiving countries.

The history of co-operation in East Africa dates back to the colonial days. It depicts the goodwill which existed and exists among the East African countries to co-operate and work together. This history gives impetus to the current thinking and conceptualization of the East African Community. Within this framework, all socio-economic sectors are bound to be influenced in different dimensions. One such sector is the education sector where for instance there has been remarkable student flight from one country to another in search of higher education.

The flight of students from one county to another should be something of concern to education authorities in EAC. Whereas it has been argued that the main reasons behind the flight are the costs associated with favorable exchange rates that act in favour of Ugandan currency, this is subject to debate and investigation. Thus, more questions should go beyond the issue of the costs and focus on the role of the structure of education used in member countries on unequal student exchange, access, relevance of the systems of education in the member countries and most significantly, on the cooperation between the member states. Therefore, reasonable questions must be interrogated to establish the reasons behind the flight of students in higher education from Kenya and vice versa. Thus this study interrogates the central question; why is cross border higher education students mobility unequal and what can be done to correct the imbalance?

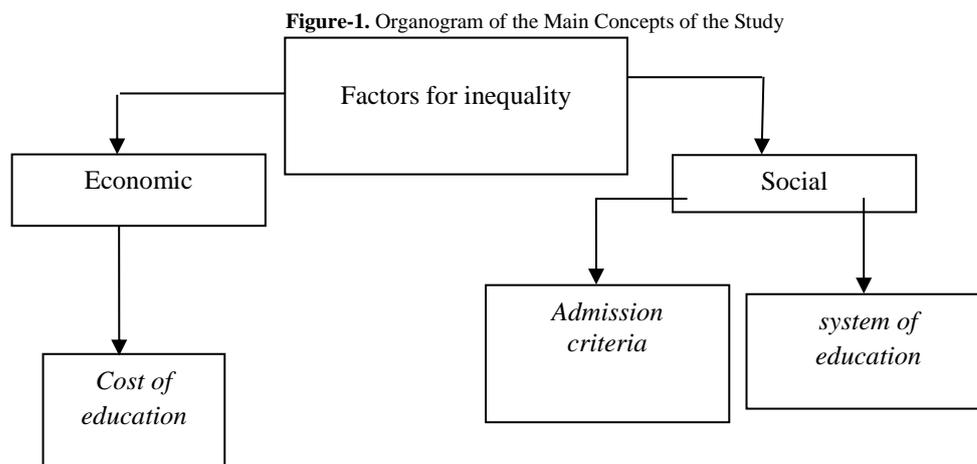
## 2. Central Research Question

This study was guided by the following main question.

- i) Why is cross border higher education students’ mobility unequal in EAC?

## 3. Concepts

According to Gerring (1999), concept formation lies at the heart of all social science research. The significance of concept formation lies in its ability to aid proper conceptualization of the topic of study since every author makes lexical and semantic choices as they write. In this study, the terrain of concepts was developed in an organogram as shown in Figure 1 below.



Source: Own Conception

Subsequently, the main concepts of the study were defined as follows:

**Factors for inequality:** As used in this study, this reefers to the major factors that would cause inequitable cross-border students’ movement across the border of the EAC member states in search of higher education.

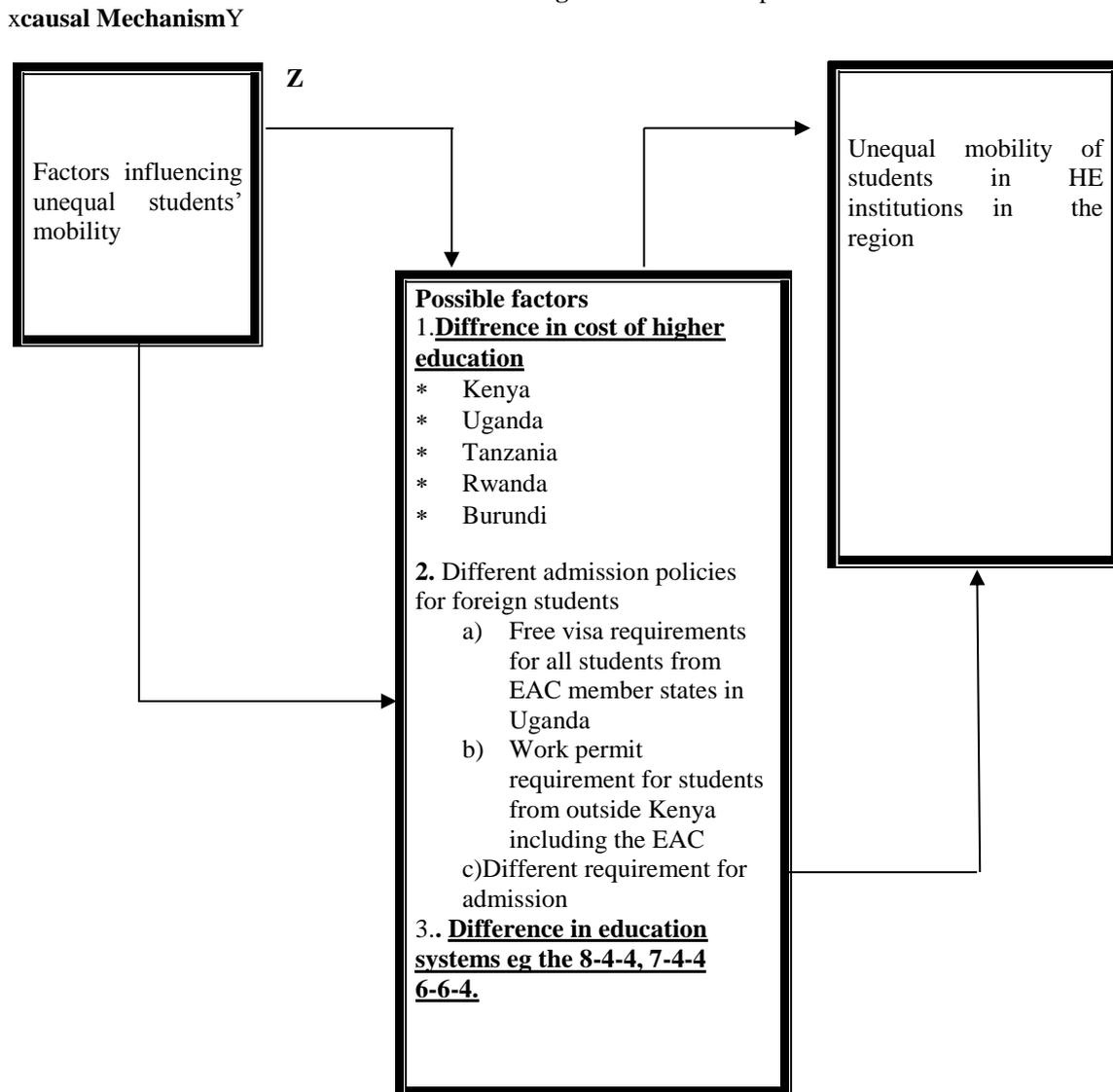
**Economic factors:** refers to economic explanations for cross-border students' movement in search of higher education. They are further explained as related to the costs of purchasing higher education (both direct and indirect).

**Social factors:** Refers to social explanations for cross border students' movement in search of higher education in EAC member states. These are also explained as being related to the admission criteria (encumbrances) and the structure system of education in member states (See also details in Figure 1).

#### 4. The Causal Path

Causality has been defined as a theoretical concept independent of the data used to learn about it (King *et al.*, n.d.). In this study the outcome variable (dependent variable) is the unequal mobility of student seeking HE in the region and it is denoted by Y. However, the causal variable (independent variable) are the factors influencing unequal students' mobility and is denoted by X. The possible factors which are myriad are hypothesized and denoted by Z.

Figure-2. The causal path



Source: own conception

Figure 2 explains the (X) causal factors (independent variable) influencing (Y) unequal students' mobility among the member states (dependent variable). The possible factors (X) are hypothesized as being related to the difference in costs of university education in EAC member states. Literature search revealed that countries like Uganda with relatively lower costs of university education tended to attract more students from the region compared to Kenya where costs of higher education was seen to be higher and beyond reach for average families (Odebero, 2011).

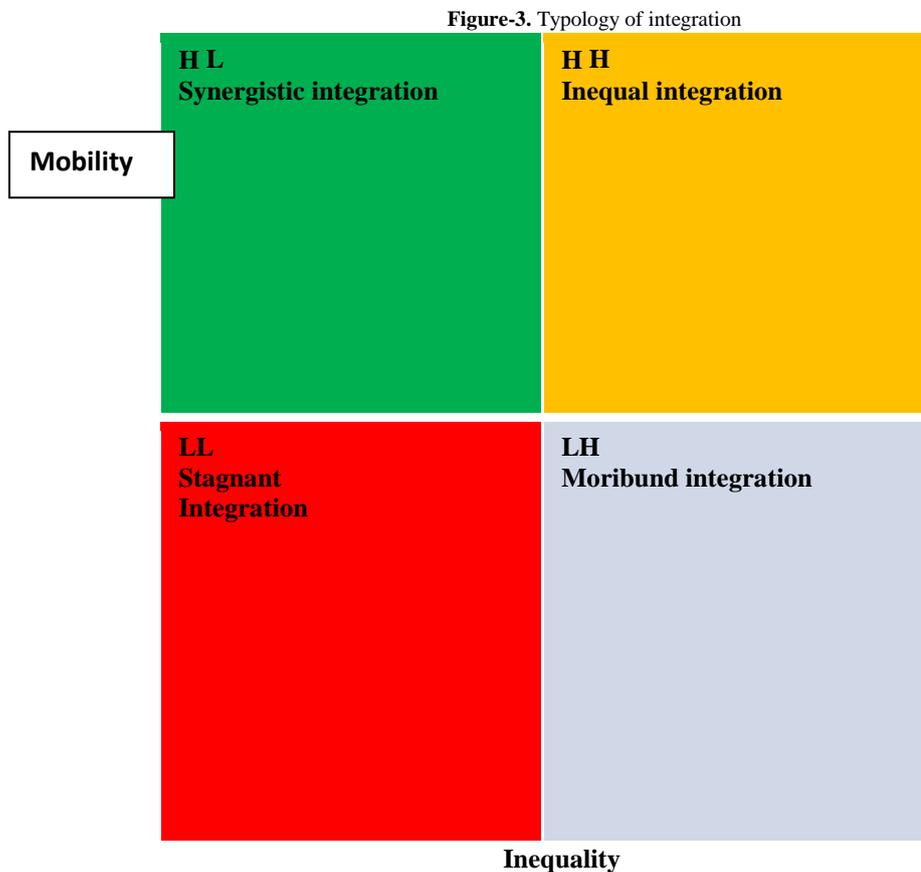
Another reason for inequality in cross border students movement is explained as being related to different admission policies in member countries. Here again, Uganda has attracted more students because her universities tend to be more flexible in admission requirements compared to Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi and Kenya.

Of critical importance is the fact that Uganda has been accepting students with relatively inferior grades at KCSE to pursue university education. Kenya’s commission for Higher Education insists on a KCSE mean score of C+ and above as the minimum requirement for university admission.

### 5. Typology of Integration

Scholars [Otieno and Francis \(2009\)](#) assert that challenges frustrating the process of integration in East Africa should be dealt with decisively through mechanisms that will merge existing political and ideological differences in member countries. One such mechanism is education, mainly because the interplay of education and development results in economic prosperity and also because it brings about social and political integration through sharing of ideas, skills, attitudes and knowledge. And in education specifically, neofunctionalists believe that as the member states see the benefits resulting from educational integration, they will be willing to give it a broader mandate until integrating effects are virtually overwhelming. That is why differences that could result from inequity in distribution of educational opportunities, processes and outcomes must be addressed (cited in [Odebero \(2011\)](#)).

With this grounding in the theory of neofunctionalism, the typology of integration for this study explains that educational integration entails the capacity for cross border movement of students in higher education institutions, including credit accumulation and transfer mainly in tertiary institutions and universities, among other areas (see [Figure 3](#)). The process involved in educational integration is long and tedious, but the framework envisages that positive spillover effects will bear incentives for integration in further sectors, transfer of domestic allegiance that could lead to the emergence of interest groups and associations that would champion regional integration as shown in [Figure 3](#).



[Figure 3](#) explains that low students mobility and low integration would lead to undesirable type of integration called stagnant integration. The reverse of it is when we have very high students’ mobility and very high inequality that would lead to unequal integration. This type of integration would also be undesirable because it propagates inequitable integration. It resonates quite well with the situation currently obtaining in member countries, where cross border students mobility is quite high but concentrated in more or less one country. If this is corrected we would end up with high students’ mobility with low inequality and this would result in a more desirable type of integration called synergistic integration which this study would encourage. The reverse of this would be moribund integration because although it has a more equitable distribution of cross boarder students’ movement, it is hinged on low mobility. This would call for an inquiry into low pace of movement in the region.

Therefore, the framework acknowledges that as broader integration leads to cohesion among people in the member states, regional educational inequalities should be bridged through harmonized curricula and equalized education systems. Stereotyping of some graduates of the education systems in the region could affect their

performance in the labour market with disastrous effect on the economies of their countries; this could easily sow a seed of conflict that could result in the collapse of educational and political integration effort.

## 6. Materials and Methods of Review

The study was done as spatial variation based on concept of extreme case selection and the most likely condition. Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Rwanda were perceived as the most influential cases for selection to be included in the study. Ugandan universities were seen as the destination of cross border students movement in the region while Kenya, Tanzania and Rwanda were the exit points as asserted by [Kimani \(2010\)](#) and [Mutai \(2010\)](#).

### 6.1. Primary Data

Primary data was collected from male and female students enrolled in HE institutions or those who have studied across the borders. Instruments for data collection included questionnaires and focus group discussions (FGDs) done before the research visit.

Students documented their gender, reasons for studying across the border, their experiences and recommendations for equitable students' movement. Key informants in strategic positions in EAC were also targeted using questionnaires administered through email contacts. They were mainly senior officers in universities.

### 6.2. Secondary Data

Secondary data was got through process tracing of admission policies, cost of living and tuition costs in different countries. This was purposed to determine factors influencing students' movement in the region where Key online literature was used. The findings were carefully put into perspective and interpreted to pave way for conclusions and recommendations for the study.

### 6.3. Quality Appraisal Strategy

Quality appraisal strategy adapted was in line with the central research question in the proposal. Assessment of the identified studies, including the overall proposal was subjected to several independent peer reviewers. Initial proposal and review was sent to prospective host professors in Germany whose comments were addressed. Other comments and reviews were initiated by the DAAD, which also had the discretion to accept or reject the proposal if the overall quality was below international standards for support. DAAD's report was addressed but with one additional host supervisor in educational integration to oversee the project in Germany. Structured discussions of the study with host professors and presentations at the Centre for Area studies (CAS) and the editorial process also acted as benchmarks for quality.

### 6.4. Contextualizing the Findings

Both published and unpublished literature was used. In addition, technical reports, conference proceedings, newspaper reports and working papers which may not have been subjected to peer review were used in this study including online material. However, since data collected were mainly qualitative, the literature was subjected to different methods of synthesis but issues of quality, heterogeneity of included studies, the likely impact of bias and the applicability of the findings were comprehensively addressed.

## 7. Findings of the study

The study reached the following findings which were meant to shed light on the causes of unequal cross border higher education students' mobility in EAC.

### 7.1. Unequal Costs of Higher Education in EAC

The dominance of Kenyan students in Uganda's tertiary institutions has largely been attributable to the high cost of tertiary education in Kenya. Most literature and the interviewed students and senior administrators in HE institutions indicated that the relatively lower cost of higher education in Uganda was the main attracting factor for most Kenyan students. Responding online to a Daily Monitor's post for the relatively high numbers of Kenyan students in Ugandan universities, some respondents felt that Universities in Kenya were meant for the rich and were therefore inaccessible by the majority poor (cited in [Daily Monitor \(2014\)](#)) -05-21:

*The Universities in Kenya were meant for the rich...so, the pinch is still there though....slowly by slowly things are catching up... (sic)*

In one private university, a senior officer admitted that up to 44% of the 2872 graduants in the year 2013 were Kenyans and this, he attributed to the relatively lower cost of education at the institution compared to the charges in Kenya ([Daily Monitor, 2014](#)). The Kenyan Government admitted that over 40,000 Kenyan students were admitted in Uganda's various institution of higher learning with Makerere University the oldest institution of higher learning hosting over 3500 students ([Mutai, 2010](#)).

The scramble for higher education in Uganda; Kenyans obtaining short permits to travel to Uganda for studies at the Kenya Uganda Border in Busia town



Source: Daily Monitor (2014)

This is a high number by any standards and with the current cost of HE estimated at ksh 100,000 per year, it means that Kenya could be losing up to ksh 4 billion annually in foreign exchange.

## 7.2. Unharmonized Tuition Fees in EAC

As if admitting that cost of higher education in the region was an issue, three East African Community member states signed a local agreement meant to harmonise tuition fees. Under the ‘coalition of the willing’, Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda signed an agreement that was meant to bind the three states into charging local tuition fees for students moving to study in either of the three countries (Smith, 2014). However, despite the signing of this agreement, there is no guarantee that indeed, the fees charged will be harmonized in order to enhance equitable student movement in the region. Moreover, the fact that Tanzania and Burundi were not included in the local agreement means that EAC states are yet to agree on harmonized fees. This led to the signing of another agreement dubbed the ‘Northern Corridor integration Projects’ by Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and South Sudan (see circular Ref MoE.HQS/3/9/11 DATED 4.6.2014).

In a recent proposal, countries in the EAC acknowledged that differences in tuition fees paid in HE institutions had inhibited free movement of students in the region and mooted a plan to harmonize tuition fees that will enable continuing students enrolled in HE institutions in the region to freely move to any university in any member country without having to be subjected to higher tuition fees there (Kabeera, 2013).

However, even with this proposal, universities in member countries are said to be hesitant to approve or adopt the idea because of limited funding from their governments. Public universities rely solely on tuition fees charged and government capitation for sustenance of their programmes while private universities rely mainly on tuition fees. Therefore, reduced fees in harmonization may inhibit their operations. In addition, as argued elsewhere in this paper, taxation also eats on to the universities income from tuition fees and unless the taxation law is amended in some countries like Kenya to reduce corporate tax for higher education institutions, reduced fees in harmonization will injure Kenyan universities to a halt.

The duration of stay in a university will also undermine the harmonization effort. Even if tuition fees were to be the same, this does not necessarily imply that the cost of university education will necessarily be the same in member states owing to the difference in the duration one has to stay in university in different member states. Member countries with 4 years basic university education such as Kenya, Rwanda and Burundi will pay more in the long run compared to those with 3 years basic university education practiced in Uganda and Tanzania. In the end, tuition fees for countries with a 3 year basic university education will continue to attract more students than in countries where the 4 year period is adopted. The harmonization effort, though a welcome idea, will most likely not solve the problem of unequal students’ mobility in search of higher education in the region.



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MoE.HQS/3/9/11

4<sup>th</sup> June, 2014

### CIRCULAR

TO: ALL VICE-CHANCELLORS OF PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES  
ALL PRINCIPALS OF PUBLIC UNVERISTY COLLEGES  
ALL PRINCIPALS OF PUBLIC MIDDLE LEVEL COLLEGES

RE: SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS FROM PARTNER STATES IN THE  
NORTHERN CORRIDOR INTEGRATION PROJECTS

At the 4<sup>th</sup> Summit of Heads of State of the Republics of Rwanda, Uganda, South Sudan and Kenya under the auspices of the Northern Corridor Integration Projects held in Kampala, Uganda in February 2014, the Heads of State, "noted the request by the Republic of South Sudan for support in capacity building in allocation of projects, particularly railways and support Sudanese students studying in the region."

At the 5<sup>th</sup> Summit held in Nairobi, Kenya on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of May 2014, the Heads of States specifically directed that all students from Partner States of the Northern Corridor Integration Projects (Republics of Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda and South Sudan) studying in public institutions of higher learning within the member states, pay tuition fees at rates paid by the nationals of the host state.

You are therefore required to implement the directive from the date of this Circular.

Prof. Jacob T. Kaimenyi, PhD, FICD, EBS  
CABINET SECRETARY

Copy to: PS, Chief of Staff and Head of the Public Service  
PS, State Department of Education  
PS, State Department of Science, Technology and Innovation  
CEO, Commission for University Education

Source: Kaimenyi (2014) MOEST circular

Although the circular targets integration of partner states in the northern corridor, it will be noted that Tanzania is not included in the cooperation. This may mean that there could be misunderstanding within partner states in the implementation of key resolutions. In addition, even if the International rates are waived for cooperating partners in Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and South Sudan, there is no guarantee that this will lead to harmonized fees charges. Details are seen in the different fees charges as shown in [Table 1](#).

**Table-1.** Tuition fees charged in EAC per year in US\$

State	Min fees	Max fees	Average	Min years univ
Kenya	3750	6500	5125	4
Uganda	1200	5000	3100	3
Tanzania	4000	6000	5000	3
Rwanda	Not shown	Not shown	No source	4
Burundi	“	“	“	4

Source: adopted from many sources

From the Table, it can be discerned that there are already huge variations in the amount of tuition fees charged by HE institutions in the EAC member countries and committing HE institutions to charging local fees only waives the international charges which every student seeking higher education in a foreign country is obliged to pay.

Besides, recent studies have now shown that the cost of education varies from institution to institution and could be characterized by many factors such as the location of the university, level of government support, infrastructural development, and the type of courses being offered among other factors (Odebero *et al.*, 2007). In essence, the study argues and documents evidence that the cost of education in urban areas is likely to be more expensive than sub-urban or rural locations. Equally, the science related courses such as engineering, medicine and architecture could cost more than most courses in the social sciences.

### 7.3. The Effect of Tax Regimes on Tuition Fees and Unequal Students Mobility

Apart from fees variations, another factor that could have a major impact on the costs of HE is the level of taxation. Kenya has been touted as one of the countries with the highest level of taxation in EAC and usually, the burden is passed on to those willing to purchase HE. Ayieko (2010) observed that Kenya has implemented the highest corporate tax regime in EAC at 49.7 percent followed closely by Tanzania at 45 percent. Uganda and Rwanda had the lowest corporate tax rates at 32 percent and 31 percent respectively. There has been no provision for graduated tax rate system under which corporations or HE institutions with lower levels of income especially private entities could pay a lower rate of tax. Differences in corporate tax rates are shown in table 2.

**Table-2.** Asymmetries in tax regimes in EAC

Country	% Tax Regime	Rank in EAC
Kenya	49.7	1
Tanzania	45	2
Uganda	32	3
Rwanda	31	4
Burundi	-	-

Source: Derived from (Ayieko, 2010)

Evidently from Table 2, Kenya has the highest tax regime, followed by Tanzania, Uganda and Rwanda in that order. The corporate tax rates in Kenya and Tanzania is said to be one of the highest in the world surpassing most of the developed countries like Australia at 30 percent, Canada 34 percent and United Kingdom 24 percent. Higher tax regimes have a direct effect on tuition fees charges by universities and other tertiary colleges. Corporations such as universities will tend to pass the burden of taxation to the consumers and hence higher corporate tax will lead to higher tuition fees differentiated according to varied tax regimes.

In the final analysis, countries with higher corporate tax regimes will invite higher tuition fees as opposed to those with lower corporate tax. It follows that the pricing of tuition fees is based on the punitive corporate tax measures instituted by member states. As Kassam *et al.* (2013) would rightly point out, taxation of gross revenue streams without consideration of the cost of production is punitive to small scale [and large scale investors] who may still be struggling to extract marginal reserves. In Kenya for instance, the taxation law requires that any business operating with a turnover in the range of ksh 7 million and above p.a, falls under the purview of taxation and is subject to monthly tax returns, the overall cost of production notwithstanding.

The Act states *inter alia* at part ii, (Republic of Kenya, 2012)

*Subject to, and in accordance with this Act, a tax to be known as income tax shall be charged for each year of income upon all the income of a person, which accrued in or was derived...from gains or profits from... a business, for whatever period of time carried on.*

In conceiving the Act, the overall cost of production was not implied and therefore leaving investors especially HE investors at the mercy of the noose of the taxman. Besides, it is not possible that a business can make profit every year. Losses are real in business ventures.

Impliedly, what this means is that the cost of education can even be much lower if taxation policies in member states can be revised to factor in not just the revenue streams but also the audited books of accounts where the overall profits posited and the overall cost of production are put into consideration.

In his postulation about the causes of unequal students' mobility, the Executive Secretary of the Inter-University Council for East Africa almost got taxation into picture when he argued that HE institutions hike tuition fees because of lack of funding from the government thus scaring away students. Besides, he notes that governments are unable to allocate sufficient funds to universities. In the new budget for 2014/2015 FY, Kenya unveiled the biggest budget since independence. The budget of 1.77 trillion ksh is said to be bigger than all the EAC states of Tanzania, Uganda, Burundi and Rwanda combined. Commenting on the budget, PWC noted that with this budget, chances were that the government was likely to increase tax on consumption goods but noted further that the income was not safe from increased tax at all. This means that the cost of higher education is likely to continue escalating.

#### 7.4. Inequalities Due to Asymmetries in Education System in EAC

The education systems adopted in EAC is one of the most unequal in the history of integrating nations in the world. Member states in the EAC despite starting off with a fairly homogenous system of education adopted from their colonial masters, at present, the education systems in the region experience wide disparities as follows.

**Table-3.** Asymmetries in education systems in EAC

Country	Structure (years)	Primary	Secondary				Total secondary	Total pre-university general education	Minimum university
			Secondary	Lower	Upper	A-level			
Rwanda	6-3-3-4	6	N/A	3	3	N/A	6	12	4
Burundi	6-3-3-4	6	N/A	3	3	N/A	6	12	4
Kenya	8-4-4	8	4	N/A	N/A	N/A	4	12	4
Tanzania	7-4-2-3	7	4	N/A	N/A	2	6	13	3
Uganda	7-4-2-3	7	4	N/A	N/A	2	6	13	3

Source: derived from (Odebero, 2011).

From Table 3, it can be discerned that Rwanda and Burundi are on a 6-3-3-4 systems of education encompassing 6 years of primary education, 3 years of lower secondary and 3 years of upper secondary. Their university education requires a minimum of 4 years totaling to 16 years education. Tanzania and Uganda are on a 7-4-2-3 system of education requiring 7 years of primary, 4 years of secondary and another 2 years at advanced level with university education taking 3 years at the very minimum. On the contrary, Kenya has a unique system of education in EAC taking 8 years of primary with 4 years of secondary education while a basic degree takes 4 years. Kenya Rwanda and Burundi, because of the lack of A level segment in their education system, have pegged their minimum university duration at 4 years contrary to Uganda and Tanzania where university education takes only 3 years.

As Nicholas Langat has noted (cited in Mutai (2010))

*Before the integration of the EAC in 1977, the member countries including Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania, vastly enjoyed the 7-4-2-3 education system that extended to sitting of one paper across the region. It at the same time allowed students in the region to join any of the giant East African universities including University of Nairobi, Dar es Salaam and Makerere University each on identified field of knowledge.*

In this paper, we argue that countries whose integration effort is still at a low level and experiencing insurmountable challenges like the EAC cannot propagate such huge asymmetries in their education systems and hope to be successful. The five countries in the region are practicing 3 different education systems and this could portend doom to the integration efforts as it inhibits labour mobility in the region. No meaningful integration effort can be achieved without an education system that allows for free movement of labour and human capital in general. Overall, these asymmetries have disadvantaged Kenya as a destination of students mobility in search of HE. Students in Uganda and Tanzania, upon sitting their Advanced level examinations, expect to complete their basic university education in 3 years. Studying in Kenya, Rwanda or Burundi, would mean they are subjected to a 4 year curriculum and this would lead to unnecessary increased duration and costs of their education. This is well explained by Mwikambi Kabui (Cited in Kabeera (2013)), when he observed that a mechanism is needed to have a common education system to eliminate suspicion of incompetence among graduates adding that HE in EAC needed to have a unified syllabus and a system where students do entry exams before joining the university to make sure that all students are on the same level. The integration effort cannot run away from the reality, for long because the reality is that at the end the EAC will need a unified system of education be it the 7-4-2-3 system or the 8-4-4 system of education. This thinking is alluded to by article 102(e) of the EAC Treaty which requires partner states to harmonize curricular, examination and certification. Having entry examinations or simply harmonizing curricular are only short term solutions. These differences in education system cannot be ignored because they have cost implications.

## 7.5. Inequalities Due to Admission Policy and Subject Specialization

The implementation of the 8-4-4 system of education in Kenya in 1981 under the President Moi regime was supposed to be a harbinger of increased access to HE by students given its broad curricula. It replaced the former system of education (the 7-4-2-3) which was accused of being majorly academic and only trained students for white collar jobs. Kenya being majorly an agricultural economy, majority of the students graduating from the education system became jobless for lack of practical skills. The Prof Mackay led Commission which was charged with reviewing the education system that had been in use since independence, found it unsuitable to drive the economic demands at the time and accordingly replaced it with the Canadian 8-4-4 system of education that had a broader curriculum and laid emphasis on the science subjects, vocational and practical subjects (Republic of Kenya, 1965).

But the implementation of the new system may have come to haunt Kenyans now as three quarters of the students who sit form four examinations miss out on the universities central placement board (KUCCPS) list. It is expected that those who miss out on the JAB list seek admission in private universities and other middle level colleges but this has proved to be a major challenge owing to inadequate and poorly equipped middle level colleges. Since 1998 when the pressure from the World Bank allowed governments in Sub-Saharan Africa to privatize higher education, so did the demise of the middle level colleges begin as most of them have been collapsed into universities and constituent colleges of public universities who are struggling to keep afloat due to inadequate funding from the exchequer. The collapse of middle level colleges has constricted students admission in tertiary institutions. According to Kenya national Examination Council Reports (KNEC 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014, there were 357 488 KCSE candidates in 2010, 411783; in 2011, and 436349 in 2012. The year 2013 recorded the highest number of KCSE candidates at 446,696.

However, from 2011 to 2013, it turns out that more than 400,000 school leavers from Kenyan secondary schools were unable to proceed with any form of education. In 2013, out of out of 446,696 KCSE candidature, only 123,365 representing 27.5 percent had managed to score C+ and above Kaimenyi (2014) and who would possibly be admissible in Kenya's public and private universities going by the Commission for University Education regulations 2013. The remaining lot was to pursue their careers in middle level colleges and other technical and vocational colleges. However, enrolment in national polytechnics, other technical and vocational institutions including youth polytechnics is low at an average total enrolment of 75,000 students per annum. This is despite the fact that the country releases slightly over 300,000 student per year with less than grade C+ who are expected to enrol in middle level colleges.

Kenyan students graduating from Ugandan universities



Source: Mutai (2010)

## 7.6. The a Level Segment and Subject Specialization

Most of the students interviewed argued that they were attracted to Uganda's system of education due to the A level segment that allowed them to pursue subjects of their choice unlike Kenya where they were forced to do all subjects including those they were not talented in. Every year when KCSE examination results are released, scores of students score grades that cannot take them to university by Kenyan standards. The Kenya's Commission for University Education (CUE) only allows those with grade C+ and above in KCSE to be admitted to university education. The remaining lot who are the majority, are advised to pursue their careers in middle level colleges and Youth polytechnics. In his speech during the release of 2013 KCSE results, the Kenyan Cabinet Secretary for Education noted that out of 446,696 candidature, only 123,365 representing 27.5 percent had managed to score C+ and above (Kaimenyi, 2014). These would possibly be admissible in Kenya's public and private universities going by the Commission for University Education regulations 2013. The remaining lot were advised to pursue their careers in middle level colleges and other technical and vocational colleges. He stated thus:

*I wish to inform the candidates who sat their examinations in 2013 that there exists many opportunities besides university education. Majority of the graduants with a mean grade below C+ and above and even those with C+ and above who will not be absorbed by both public and private universities can be absorbed into middle level colleges and other TVET institutions (sic) (Kaimenyi, 2014)*

It is important to note that the cabinet secretary in charge of policies in education notes that majority of the form four graduants do not make it to university education in this case over 72 percent. Equally important is his advise to join middle level colleges and other TVET institutions. Lets now consider the opportunities available to the majority of the students with less than C+ and who are also likely to come from lower socio-economic status.

### 7.7. Low Access to Universities and Middle Level Colleges and Alternatives Available At Optimal Cost

The table below shows opportunities available to form four leavers unable to get admission into university education.

**Table-4.** Student enrollment in middle level colleges and TVET centers in Kenya (2006-2009).

Type of Institution	2006		2007		2008		2009	
	Male	female	Male	female	Male	female	Male	female
National polytechnics	12,914	7,581	13,189	8,095	13,822	9,098	4,225	2,774
Technical & vocational institutions	14,886	12,835	16,226	13,990	17,939	14,644	18,434	14,736
Youth Polytechnics	8,741	14,210	9,528	15,489	12,154	17,543	13,222	18,122
Total	36,541	34,626	3,8942	37,574	43,915	41,285	35,881	35,632
<b>Grand total</b>	71,167		76,516		85,200		71,513	

**Source:** Odebero (2012) ‘Situational analysis of the education sector in Kenya’. a consultancy report prepared for TNS/RMS and Safaricom foundation. Unpublished.

From the Table, enrolment in national polytechnics in 2007 and 2008 stood at around 14,000 for male and 9000 for female in 2008 but plummeted to about 4000 males and 3000 females from 2009. This is attributable to the elevation of the two national polytechnics (Mombasa and Kenya Polytechnics) to university colleges (ROK, 2009). It is regrettable that despite the low number of middle level colleges, polytechnics and TIVETS, the Government of Kenya could still turn them into university colleges thus affecting students’ access to polytechnics by more than half. However, it is noted from the table that youth polytechnics attract more female students than males.

It is discernible that enrolment in Kenya’s national polytechnics, other technical and vocational institutions including youth polytechnics is low at an average of 75,000 students for the period studied. This is despite the fact that the country releases slightly over 300,0000 student per year with less than grade C+ who are expected to enrol in middle level colleges. This means that we have close to 285831 form four graduants who have no opportunity for middle level education representing around 64% of the total number of KCSE candidature.

**Table-5.** Student enrollment in public and private universities in Kenya (2006-2009)

The table below indicates opportunities available in public and private universities for students who score C+ and above in Kenya.

Type of Institution	2006/07		2007/08		2008/09		2009/10	
	Male	female	Male	female	Male	female	Male	female
Public universities	56,517	34,820	60,504	36,603	62,753	37,896	8,9611	52,945
Private universities	11,826	9,064	10,271	10,861	10,790	11,408	20,717	14,462
Total	68,345	43,884	70,775	47,464	73,543	49,304	110,328	67,407
<b>Grand total</b>	112,229		118,239		122,847		177,735	

**Source:** Ministry of Higher Education, Science & Technology and) Ministry of State for Youth and Sports, cited in Commission for Higher Education (CHE, 2011).

According to Kaimenyi (2014) 123,365 representing 27.5 percent had managed to score C+ and above in the 2013 KCSE. Current statistics indicate that enrolment in public and private universities is on the increase from

around 178,000 in 2010 (as shown in [table](#) above) to over 300,000 in 2013/2014. This means that the country can meet the demand for university education by upto 60-70% compared to middle level colleges where the country can barely meet 36%. Impliedly, there seems to be limited opportunities for middle level education to meet the demands for that cycle of education as over 64% of form four leavers desirous of joining middle level education cannot get the opportunity. The situation is made worse by the government policy that has allowed public universities to muzzle the middle level colleges and turn them into constituent colleges. Most of the students interviewed alluded to the dearth of middle level education for those who can't make it to the university. Uganda was seen as the alternative as entry into advanced level education (A-Level) rekindled their hope for further education. It gave them a chance to select 3 subjects they were talented in which they later pursued at the university unlike Kenya where the 8-4-4 system of education compelled them to take up to 8 subjects. Moreover, some students who had scored less than C+ still praised the Ugandan university education as being flexible and allowing them to take up degree courses something that drew condemnation from Kenyan higher education authorities for allowing unqualified students into their university education.

### **7.8. Dominant Language of Instruction in the Region**

Since independence, Rwandan education system used French and Kinyarwanda as their language of instruction. But since joining the EAC, the government policy on language of instruction changed. In order to fit in the regional integration, language of instruction changed to English. Many university students feel that they will be better placed in the job market if they understand English comprehensively but contend that the development of the language is low in Rwanda. According to [Kabeera \(2013\)](#) there are over 1128 students who cross the border in search of HE outside Rwanda and report that most of those who moved to Uganda wanted to improve their reading culture and comprehensively understand English since this was still a huge challenge among the local institutions. But major questions still arise as to why most of those the students cross over to Uganda and not Kenya despite the fact that both Kenya and Uganda were British colonies and have well developed structures of English language.

## **8. Conclusions and Recommendations**

The study reached the following conclusions on the causes of unequal students' movement in EAC .

### **8.1. Unequal Costs of Higher Education in EAC**

The study established that dominance of Kenyan students in Uganda's tertiary institutions has largely been attributable to the high cost of higher education in Kenya. Literature reviewed including students interviewed indicated that the relatively lower cost of higher education in Uganda was the main attracting factor to them. The study also finds that some respondents felt that Universities in Kenya were meant for the rich and were therefore inaccessible by the majority poor. Senior university administrators in some private universities in Uganda also opined that up to 44% of the 2872 graduants in the year 2013 were Kenyans and this they attributed to the relatively lower cost of education in Uganda compared to the charges in Kenya. Some officers in Kenyan Government also admitted that over 40,000 of Kenyan students were admitted in various institution of higher learning in Uganda.

### **8.2. Unharmonised Tuition Fees in EAC**

The study also found that three East African Community member states signed a local agreement meant to harmonise tuition fees. Under the coalition of the willing, Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda signed an agreement that will bind the three into charging local tuition fees for students moving to study in either of the three countries. Another agreement between, 5 member countries namely Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and South Sudan but excluding Tanzania and dubbed Northern corridor integration project was reached and required all students in member states studying in public universities in the integrating states of this project to pay fees charged by nationals of host state. However, despite the signing of the two agreements, this study concludes that there is no guarantee that indeed, the fees charged will be harmonized in order to enhance equitable student movement in the region. Besides, Tanzania, a key EAC member state did not commit itself in the two agreements. It is also noted that the agreements are only enforceable in public universities.

### **8.3. Inequalities Due to the Effect of Tax Regimes on Tuition Fees**

It was further established that the EAC member states experience varied tax regimes which have an effect on tuition fees charged. Kenya was found to have the highest level of corporatetax at 49.7% followed closely by Tanzania at 45 percent while Uganda and Rwanda had the lowest corporate tax rates at 32 percent and 31 percent respectively. There has been no provision for graduated tax rate system under which corporations or HE institutions with lower levels of income especially private entities could pay a lower rate of tax. In the final analysis, countries with higher corporate tax regimes have invited higher tuition fees as opposed to those with lower corporate tax. The study concludes that the pricing of tuition fees is based on the punitive corporate tax measures instituted by member states and this has largely resulted in the huge difference in the tuition fees charged which in turn has resulted in inequitable students' mobility in the region.

#### **8.4. Inequalities Due to Asymmetries in Education System in EAC**

The study found that education systems in EAC was the most varied with Rwanda and Burundi adopting a 6-3-3-4 systems of education encompassing 6 years of primary education, 3 years of lower secondary and 3 years of upper secondary. Their university education requires a minimum of 4 years totaling to 16 years education. Tanzania and Uganda are on a 7-4-2-3 system of education requiring 7 years of primary, 4 years of secondary and another 2 years at advanced level with university education taking 3 years at the very minimum. On the contrary, Kenya was on a unique system of education structured on 8-4-4 thus taking 8 years of primary with 4 years of secondary education while a basic degree takes 4 years.

It was established that these asymmetries have disadvantaged Kenya as a destination of students' mobility in search of HE because students in Uganda and Tanzania, upon sitting their Advanced level examinations, expect to clear their basic university education in 3 years. Studying in Kenya, Rwanda or Burundi, would mean they are subjected to a 4 year curriculum and this would lead to unnecessary increase in duration and total costs incurred for their education. This is well explained by Mwikambi Kabui (Cited in Kabeera (2013)), when he observed that a mechanism is needed to have a common education system to eliminate suspicion of incompetence among graduates adding that HE in EAC needed to have a unified syllabus and a system where students do entry exams before joining the university to make sure that all students are on the same level. This study concludes that the integration effort cannot run away from the reality, for long because at the end the EAC will need a unified system of education be it the 7-4-2-3 system or the 8-4-4 system of education. This thinking is alluded to by article 102(e) of the EAC Treaty which requires partner states to harmonize curricular, examination and certification. Having entry examinations or simply harmonizing curricular are only short term solutions.

#### **8.5. Inequalities Due to Dearth of Middle Level Colleges**

It was also established that in countries like Kenya, three quarters of the students who sit form four examinations miss out on the universities Joint Admission Board (JAB) list of university admission. It is expected that those who miss out on the JAB list seek admission in private universities and other middle level colleges but this has proved to be a major challenge owing to the dearth and poorly equipped middle level colleges. Since 1998 when the pressure from the World Bank allowed governments in Sub-Saharan Africa to privatise higher education, so did the demise of the middle level colleges begin as most of them have been turned into universities and constituent colleges of public universities.

For example, the study found that the Kenya's Commission for University Education (CUE) only allows those with grade C+ and above in KCSE to be admitted to university education (CUE, 2013). The remaining lot who are the majority, are advised to pursue their careers in middle level colleges and Youth polytechnics. In 2013, out of out of 446,696 KCSE candidature, only 123,365 representing 27.5 percent had managed to score C+ and above (Kaimenyi, 2014) and who would possibly be admissible in Kenya's public and private universities going by the Commission for University Education regulations 2013. The remaining lot are to pursue their careers in middle level colleges and other technical and vocational colleges. However, enrolment in national polytechnics, other technical and vocational institutions including youth polytechnics is low at an average total enrolment of 75,000 students. This is despite the fact that the country releases slightly over 300,000 student per year with less than grade C+ who are expected to enrol in middle level colleges. The study concludes that close to 285,831 Form Four Graduants have limited opportunities for middle level education representing around 64% of the total number of KCSE candidature. Consequently, they were attracted to Uganda's system of education by the A level segment that allowed them to resurrect their careers and pursue subjects of their choice unlike Kenya where they were forced to do all subjects including those they were not talented in.

#### **8.6. Inequalities Based on Dominant Language of Instruction in the Region**

Since independence, Rwandan education system used French and Kinyarwanda as their language of instruction. Bust since joining the EAC the Government policy on language of instruction changed to English in order to fit in the regional integration. Many university students feel that they will be better placed in the job market if they understand English comprehensively but contend that the development of this language is low in Rwanda. The study found that over 1128 Rwandese students cross the border in search of HE outside Rwanda but most of them moved to Uganda with the intention of improving their reading culture and to comprehensively understand English since this was still a huge challenge among the local institutions.

#### **8.7. Hypotheses on How to Bridge Unequal Cross-Border Higher Education Students' Mobility in EAC**

##### **8.7.1. Equalizing Costs of Higher Education in EAC**

The study established that dominance of Kenyan students in Uganda's tertiary institutions has largely been attributable to the high cost of higher education in Kenya. Literature reviewed including students interviewed responded that the relatively lower cost of higher education in Uganda was the main attracting factor to them. The study recommends that universities in Kenya should consider reducing tuition fees in order to stem students' movement to Uganda and possibly attract students from other countries in the region. Several factors however, will come into play in order to make this possible that include government taxation being reviewed downwards for the sake of education.

### **8.7.2. Equalizing Tuition Fees in HE in the Region**

The study also found that three East African Community member states signed a local agreement meant to harmonise tuition fees. Under the coalition of the willing, Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda signed an agreement that was purposed to bind the three into charging local tuition fees for students moving to study in any of the three countries. Another agreement between, 5 member countries namely Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and South Sudan but excluding Tanzania and dubbed Northern corridor integration project was reached and required all students in member states studying in public universities in the integrating states of this project to pay fees charged by nationals of host state. However, despite the signing of the two agreements, this study concluded that there is no guarantee that indeed, the fees charged will be harmonized in order to enhance equitable student movement in the region. Besides, Tanzania, a key EAC member state did not commit itself to any of the two agreements. It is also noted that the agreements are only enforceable in public universities. This study recommends that the EAC member states should come up with a more comprehensive strategy to equalize tuition fees in HE institutions. To achieve this it will involve legislation of equalized taxation measures for education in the region.

### **8.7.3. Equalization of Tax Regimes in HE Sector**

The study concluded that the pricing of tuition fees is based on the corporate tax measures instituted by member states and this has largely resulted in the huge difference in the tuition fees charged which in turn has resulted in inequitable students mobility in the region. It is recommended that broad measures should be instituted by EAC member states to generate legislations that target equalized taxation for higher education sector with view to equalizing HE tuition fees in the region.

### **8.7.4. Adoption of a Unified System of Education in EAC**

The study found that education systems in EAC was the most unequal with Rwanda and Burundi adopting a 6-3-3-4 systems of education encompassing 6 years of primary education, 3 years of lower secondary and 3 years of upper secondary. Their university education requires a minimum of 4 years totaling to 16 years education. Tanzania and Uganda are on a 7-4-2-3 system of education requiring 7 years of primary, 4 years of secondary and another 2 years at advanced level with university education taking 3 years at the very minimum. On the contrary, Kenya was on a unique system of education structured on 8-4-4 thus taking 8 years of primary with 4 years of secondary education while a basic degree takes 4 years.

It was established that these asymmetries have disadvantaged Kenya as a destination of students' mobility in search of HE because students in Uganda and Tanzania, upon sitting their Advanced level examinations, expect to clear their basic university education in 3 years. Studying in Kenya, Rwanda or Burundi would mean they are subjected to a 4 year curriculum and this would lead to unnecessary increase in duration and total costs incurred for their education. The study recommends that the integration effort should aim at a unified system of education be it the 7-4-2-3 system or the 8-4-4 system of education. This thinking is alluded to by article 102(e) of the EAC Treaty which requires partner states to harmonize curricular, examination and certification. Having entry examinations harmonized or simply harmonizing curricular are only short term solutions.

### **8.7.5. Increasing Education Opportunities for All Secondary School Leavers**

It was also established that in countries like Kenya, three quarters of the students who sit form four examinations miss out on the universities Joint Admission Board (JAB) list of university admission. It is expected that those who miss out on the JAB list seek admission in private universities and other middle level colleges but this has proved to be a major challenge owing to the dearth and poorly equipped middle level colleges. The study found that in 2013, out of out of 446,696 KCSE candidature, only 123,365 representing 27.5 percent had managed to score C+ and above and who would possibly be admissible in Kenya's public and private universities going by the Commission for University Education regulations 2013. The remaining lot are to pursue their careers in middle level colleges and other technical and vocational colleges. However, enrolment in national polytechnics, other technical and vocational institutions including youth polytechnics is low at an average total enrolment of 75,000 students. This is despite the fact that the country releases slightly over 300,000 student per year with less than grade C+ who are expected to enrol in middle level colleges and concluded that close to 285,831 form four graduants have no opportunity for middle level education representing around 64% of the total number of KCSE candidature. Students were attracted to Uganda's system of education by the A level segment that allowed them to resurrect their careers and pursue subjects of their choice unlike Kenya where they were forced to do all subjects including those they were not talented in. The study recommends that a mechanism be put in place to help the form four graduants in Kenya with less than C+ to resurrect their academic careers. This could involve changing the system of education to the 7-4-2-3 system so that students can go through the A level segment that allows for subject specialization. It could also involve increasing middle level colleges and training opportunities at that level through expansion of existing middle level colleges, building new ones and prohibiting the muzzling of middle level colleges by public universities through presidential or political directives.

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