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Applicability of the high-performance organisation framework at an East African university

The case of Iringa University College

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Abstract

Purpose – In the past few decades, organizations all over the world have been searching for the elements that constitute continuous organizational success. Fuelled by bestsellers such as *In Search of Excellence* and *Good to Great*, managers have implemented many different improvement concepts, often with mixed results. The aim of this study is to identify whether the high-performance organisation (HPO) framework could help an African university to become one of the first high-performance educational organizations in Africa.

Design/methodology/approach – On the basis of a meta analysis into high performance and a subsequent worldwide survey, 35 characteristics of a HPO were identified. The resulting HPO framework was applied at Iringa University College (IUCo) in 2007, to identify the HPO status of the university and to determine the required improvement actions. In 2009, the HPO framework was again applied at the university, to evaluate progress.

Findings – In two years, IUCo not only improved its HPO status but also its financial and non-financial results. Therefore, the HPO framework can actively be used in Africa to improve the performance of African institutions.

Originality/value – The results of the study show that it is possible to identify factors that determine continuous organizational success in Africa, and that managers can be offered a framework that adds focus to improvement.

Keywords Business performance, Universities, Organizational performance, Tanzania

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Building world-class universities is an important strategy for national development among developed and developing countries (Wang, 2001; Salmi, 2009). The reason for this is that both economic growth and global competitiveness are increasingly driven by knowledge, and as a result of this universities play a key role as they generate and disseminate this knowledge (Salmi, 2009). Traditionally, universities focused on developing, storing and transmitting knowledge; meeting the needs of the economy and industry; meeting the aspirations and needs of students; serving the needs of local

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and regional communities; and fostering civilisation and values (Tremblay, 2000). In recent years, governments have made funding for universities an even higher priority as governments regard universities as the bodies that prepare future intellectual leaders, creative innovators and educators; generate ideas and innovations that will fuel the economy for the next generation; and provide a pool of knowledge and expertise that can support and legitimate governmental actions (Tremblay, 2000).

The importance of universities in an ever increasingly competitive world has evolved in the concept of the world-class university (de Boer *et al.*, 2002; Taylor and Braddock, 2007; Sadlak and Liu, 2009). Altbach (2003) remarks that:

> Everyone wants a world-class university. No country feels it can do without one. The problem is that no one knows what a world-class university is, and no one has figured out how to get one.

Many authors have attempted to fill in the concept and the following characteristics of a world-class university seem to be agreed upon (Tremblay, 2000; Shu, 2002; Altbach, 2003; Alden and Lin, 2004; Lagrosen *et al.*, 2004; Niland, 2005; Tai, 2005; European University Association, 2006; Ho, 2006; Levin *et al.*, 2006; Anninos, 2007; Jabnoun, 2009; Sadlak and Liu, 2009; Salmi, 2009). A world-class university is an excellent research institution that is recognized by peers and that "pushes back the frontiers of knowledge" (Altbach, 2003); it enjoys academic freedom and an atmosphere of intellectual excitement; it is a place where the best academics want to be, including "star" professors; it enrols only the best undergraduates; it has a low student/faculty ratio; it excels in a large number of disciplines but not necessarily in all; it has excellent research and teaching facilities; it has an international outlook and makes sure it has international professors and students; it enjoys substantial funding to support the research and teaching activities; it is part and makes effective use of international networks and alliances; it produces well-qualified graduates who are in high demand on the labour market; it has a clear governance structure that ensures good control of the various activities of the university; and it is well-managed and pursues excellence in its management systems. Many of the authors describe the aforementioned characteristics in great length and detail, especially the research and teaching aspects of the world-class university. Unfortunately, this is not the case for the characteristic "well-managed". There is hardly any literature which discusses how a university can become a well-managed establishment with management systems which "parallel the excellence in teaching and research" (Tremblay, 2000). In this respect, Tremblay (2000) remarks that "there is some debate about the attributes of academic leadership, but we know from practice that effective leadership requires both management and business insight as well as an academic reputation." Salmi (2009) adds that what is needed are "inspiring and persistent leaders, a strong strategic vision of where the institution is going, a philosophy of success and excellence, and a culture of constant reflection, organizational learning and change". And Levin *et al.* (2006) do not go further than stating that institutional characteristics that may affect quality should be considered. Finally, Makker *et al.* (2008) state that non-profit organizations like universities are increasingly employing the modern concepts of management and administration for professionally managing their organizations and add that "there is an urgent need for completely changing the approach of managing higher education in general and universities in particular" without going into further detail. Thus, there seems to be a

gap in the literature concerning the changes that have to be made and the factors that have to be paid attention to in order to make the internal organisation of a university of such high standards that the world-class university can indeed be realized. This gap potentially can be filled by applying the high-performance organisations (HPOs) framework (de Waal, 2007a, 2008). This framework was developed after the identification of the factors that are important for creating an excellent organization and that have a direct relation with competitive performance. Because the research behind the framework is so wide ranging and thorough – it encompasses not only structural but also the behavioral aspects of management and external and environmental circumstances and has been conducted worldwide – the application of the framework on universities can potentially lead to insights into what is needed to create a truly world-class university. The research question dealt within this paper therefore is:

RQ1. Can the HPO framework be applied in the higher education sector so that it can help improve the performance of universities?

The article is structured as follows. First we discuss the status and challenges of the higher education sector in Tanzania. Then the HPO framework is described. Its theoretical foundations and the practical research which led to the identification of the factors for high performance are given. After this, we apply the framework at Iringa University College (IUCo) because this Tanzanian institution aims to be among the forefront of educational institutions in East Africa. We end the article with some concluding remarks.

Higher education challenges in Tanzania

Since the independence of Tanzania in 1961, the country's educational system has grown from one institution of higher education to 200 tertiary institutions by 2007 (Msolla, 2007). In 1990, the country had only one public university, the University of Dar Es Salaam, and one technical school, the Dar Es Salaam Technical College. These two institutions comprised a total student population of less than 5,000 and there were no private colleges or universities. However, by 2007 the situation had improved dramatically. Tanzania now has 11 public universities and university colleges, 19 private universities and university colleges, and 170 other tertiary institutions. In 2007, the total number of students in both private and public universities and colleges was 52,831, with a gender composition of 33 per cent women and 77 per cent men. As Tanzania has an acute shortage of a well-qualified workforce, these higher education institutions play an important role in the further development of the country (Seebens and Wobst, 2005; Söderbom *et al.*, 2006; Manyaga, 2008; Morley *et al.*, 2009).

Unfortunately, the Tanzanian education institutions have several important issues to deal with that challenge their ability to be fully effective (Galabawa *et al.*, 2000). The expansion of primary and secondary schools in Tanzania has created a large reservoir of potential students for higher education. This increase of students has created capacity problems because the higher education institutions cannot satisfy the demand. In addition, financing higher education becomes increasingly difficult for the country. Before 1980 education in Tanzania was free but due to the big population in need of higher education, the government was forced to introduce cost-sharing mechanisms. For this the government, among others, established a Higher Education Student Loan

Board (HESLB) to facilitate the provision of loans to students. Unfortunately, the HESLB has been fraught with problems and is not very effective. Working pressures also create problems with quality assurance, hindering the smooth running of higher learning institutions. The absence of quality control measures and the lack of a national qualifications framework do not help to quickly address and solve this issue. The effectiveness problem of the institutions is furthermore augmented by a lack of skills in information and communication technology and research experiences. The educational side of the institutions also suffers from a multitude of problems, amongst which are under-qualified and unmotivated teachers, inadequate or lack of teaching and learning materials, poor infrastructure, out of date curriculum and lack of management skills at various levels.

With all these issues to deal with, it is no wonder managers in Tanzanian education institutions are increasingly looking for ways to improve the performance of their institutions (Saint, 2009). Now, not every country needs to have a world-class university as long as the fundamental higher education needs have been met (Sadlak and Liu, 2009). At the same time, world-class universities can function as beacons for the development efforts of "regular" universities towards excellence. One way to achieve world-class universities is to upgrade existing institutions. According to Salmi (2009), this option is the less-expensive option but difficult to reform and transform. This is the route that the management of IUCo has chosen and they used the HPOs framework for this (de Waal, 2007b, 2008).

The HPO framework

There have been many publications on HPOs but none of these has resulted in a coherent theory, model or framework (for an overview, see de Waal, 2006). An attempt to consolidate the various HPO research study results was made by de Waal (2007b, 2008), by conducting a descriptive review of 290 academic and practitioner publications on high performance. This meta-analysis yielded a definition of an HPO: "A high performance organization is an organization that achieves financial and non-financial results that are better than those of its peer group over a period of time of at least five to ten years." Then for each of the 290 academic and professional studies found, those elements that the authors indicated as being important for becoming a HPO were identified. Because authors used different terminologies, the identified elements were grouped into categories which therefore constituted potential HPO characteristics. For each of the potential HPO characteristics, the "weighted importance" was calculated, i.e. the number of times that it occurred in the studies. Finally, the characteristics with the highest weighted importance were selected as the HPO characteristics. These characteristics were subsequently included in an HPO survey which was administered worldwide and which encompassed more than 3,200 respondents. In this survey, the respondents were asked to indicate how good they thought their organizations were performing on the HPO characteristics (on a scale of 1 to 10) and also what their organizational results were compared to their peer group. The competitive performance was calculated using two formulas:

(1) *Relative performance (RP).* Performance of the organisation relative to the performance of its peer group, RP = 1 − ([RPT − RPS]/[RPT]) in which RPT – total number of peers and RPS – number of peers with worse performance.

(2) *Historic performance*. Performance of the organisation in the past three to five years versus the performance of its peers during that time period (possible answers: worse, the same, or better).

These subjective measures of organizational performance are scientifically proven indicators of real performance (Dawes, 1999; Devinney *et al.*, 2005; Glaister and Buckley, 1998). By performing a non-parametric Mann-Whitney test, 35 characteristics which had the strongest correlation with organizational performance were extracted and identified as the HPO characteristics. The correlation was as expected: the high-performing group scored higher on the 35 HPO characteristics than the group with lower performances. This means that organizations which pay more attention to these 35 characteristics achieve better results than their peers, in every industry, sector, and country in the world. Conversely, organizations which score low on the characteristics rank performance-wise at the bottom of their industry. This also holds true for the non-profit sector and therefore managers in the educational sector may consider focusing on improving these factors and characteristics to create a high-performance educational institution. Subsequently, a principal component analysis with oblimin rotation of the 35 characteristics resulted in five distinct HPO factors. These five HPO factors and the underlying characteristics are given in Appendix 1 and described in more detail underneath. Further details of the statistics and the characteristics can be found in de Waal (2007a, b, 2008).

The five HPO factors are:

(1) *Management quality*. Belief and trust in others and fair treatment are encouraged in an HPO. Managers are trustworthy, live with integrity, show commitment, enthusiasm, and respect, and have a decisive, action-focused decision-making style. Management holds people accountable for their results by maintaining clear accountability for performance. Values and strategy are communicated throughout the organisation, so everyone knows and embraces these.

(2) *Openness and action orientation*. An HPO has an open culture, which means that management values the opinions of employees and involves them in important organizational processes. Making mistakes is allowed and is regarded as an opportunity to learn. Employees spend a lot of time on dialogue, knowledge exchange, and learning, to develop new ideas aimed at increasing their performance and make the organization performance driven. Managers are personally involved in experimenting thereby fostering an environment of change in the organization.

(3) *Long-term orientation*. An HPO grows through partner-ships with suppliers and customers, so long-term commitment is extended to all stakeholders. Vacancies are filled by high-potential internal candidates, and people are encouraged to become leaders. An HPO creates a safe and secure workplace (both physical and mental), and dismisses employees only as a last resort.

(4) *Continuous improvement and renewal*. An HPO compensates for dying strategies by renewing them and making them unique. The organization continuously improves, simplifies and aligns its processes and innovates its products and services, creating new sources of competitive advantage to respond to market developments. Furthermore, the HPO manages its core competences efficiently, and sources out non-core competences.

(5) *Workforce quality*. An HPO assembles and recruits a diverse and complementary management team and workforce with maximum work flexibility. The workforce is trained to be resilient and flexible. They are encouraged to develop their skills to accomplish extraordinary results and are held responsible for their performance, as a result of which creativity is increased, leading to better results.

The aforementioned HPO study showed that there is a direct and positive relationship between the identified HPO factors and competitive performance: the higher the HPO scores the better the performance of the organisation, and vice versa. An organization can find out its HPO status by having management and employees fill in an HPO questionnaire and calculating the average scores on the HPO factors. The HPO framework has been applied at IUCo to help increase the performance of the college, and served to test the HPO framework theory.

Iringa University College

IUCo is one of the colleges of Tumaini University, which is owned by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania. Thus, IUCo can be characterised as being a private university (Teferra, 2009). IUCo was founded as the Lutheran College in 1993 at Iringa, in the southern part of Tanzania. The Bachelor of Business Administration Programme was launched in 1995, followed by the Bachelor of Arts (Journalism) in 1997, Bachelor of Law in 1998, and Bachelor of Education (Mathematics) in 2001. In 2004, three further programmes were introduced: a Postgraduate Diploma in Management, a Postgraduate Diploma in Education and a Masters in Business Administration. The Bachelor of Arts in Cultural Anthropology & Tourism and Counselling programs started in 2005, and the Bachelor of Arts in Community Development in 2006. Lastly, a Postgraduate Diploma in Church Management and the Bachelor of Information Technology were started in the 2007/2008 academic year. The college has four faculties (business and economics, arts and social sciences, law and theology), an Institute of Agriculture, a Directorate of Postgraduate, Research and Publication, and a Centre for Rural Entrepreneurship. Currently, IUCo has 2,700 students. These students come from all over Tanzania and neighbouring countries. Approximately, 40 per cent of the student body is female, and the college encourages more female student enrolment to achieve a gender balanced student body. IUCo has full accreditation status, granted by the Higher Education Accreditation Council. The college is headed by a provost, who is the chief executive officer, reporting directly to the Board of Directors appointed by the Trustees of Tumaini University. The provost is assisted by two line officers responsible for academic affairs and general administration, the Deputy Provost for Academic Affairs (DPAA) and the Deputy Provost for Administration (DPA). Under the DPAA report the faculty deans, directors of various directorates and heads of academic departments, while to the DPA report the chief financial officer and various departments (accounting and procurement, personnel, students' welfare and recreation, catering, security and health). The planning, internal auditing and public relations functions report directly to the provost.

Description of the research

The research described in this paper was part of a Nuffic-funded "NPT Institution Building Programme". The objective of this programme was to build IUCo's

organizational capacity so that the organization could deal adequately with the aforementioned challenges. One of the activities of the programme was to further develop and refine IUCo's strategic plan so it could better guide the activities of the college. The first IUCo strategic plan was developed in 2003/2004. The five-year plan was reviewed in 2007. A review was needed because of the huge influx of students, from less than 1,000 in 2003 to more than 2,000 in 2007. The major challenges for IUCo to be addressed by the strategic plan, apart from increased student enrolment, were: the stiff competition which intensified due to the increased number of universities in Tanzania, poor quality of the secondary school education resulting in many students with deficiencies, increased poverty level, the great distance from the big city centre (Dar Es Salaam) making it difficult to attract qualified personnel, too highly priced accommodation for off campus students, church politics and bureaucracy, and high-construction costs. The prospects of IUCo were: increased number of secondary school leavers, increased government support for private universities' expansion (resulting in more competition for privately funded IUCo), scarce availability of government loans for university students, increased general public awareness of the importance of university education, more quality faculty members joining IUCo because of its increasing reputation, and increasingly good relationships with donors because of this reputation. IUCo's management stated that the quality of the internal organisation of IUCO should not only be raised in order to deal with the aforementioned challenges, but also to increase enrolment, increase quality of teaching and research, and become financially more stable. In order to achieve this, management turned towards the HPO framework to guide its improvement focus and actions.

Results of the 2007 HPO workshop

As part of the NPT Institution Building Programme, IUCo's management (13 people) visited the Maastricht School of Management in The Netherlands in August 2006, where the strategic plan was discussed and reviewed by management together with the authors. The results of this discussion were shared among IUCo staff members in a one-day workshop organized by the provost in Spring 2007. In July 2007, the IUCo management organized a four-day strategic plan workshop to advance the project. This workshop was facilitated by the authors and management and academic staff was present (40 people in total). During the work shop, the HPO status of the college was determined, IUCo's strategic objectives were reviewed and updated, and IUCo's performance management processes were discussed to identify improvements (de Waal, 2007a). To determine the HPO status of IUCo, a questionnaire was distributed among managers and other staff. In this questionnaire, respondents indicated how good IUCo performed on the various HPO aspects, on a scale of 1 to 10. Their scores were then averaged. Figure 1 shows the HPO status of IUCo as of July 2007.

It is clear from Figure 1 that IUCo had to improve considerably on all HPO factors to achieve an excellent performance level. When looking into the individual IUCo scores of the HPO characteristics, a number of improvement themes could be identified. First, the openness and action orientation (score: 5, 1) had to be improved. IUCo's management at that time did not frequently engage in a dialogue with employees (score: 4, 3), IUCo's employees themselves did not spend much time on communication, knowledge exchange and learning (score: 4, 7), and IUCo's management did not allow people to make mistakes (score: 5, 0). Thus, to improve this HPO aspect, IUCo had to become more open and courageous on all levels. Open in the sense that they had to increase vertical

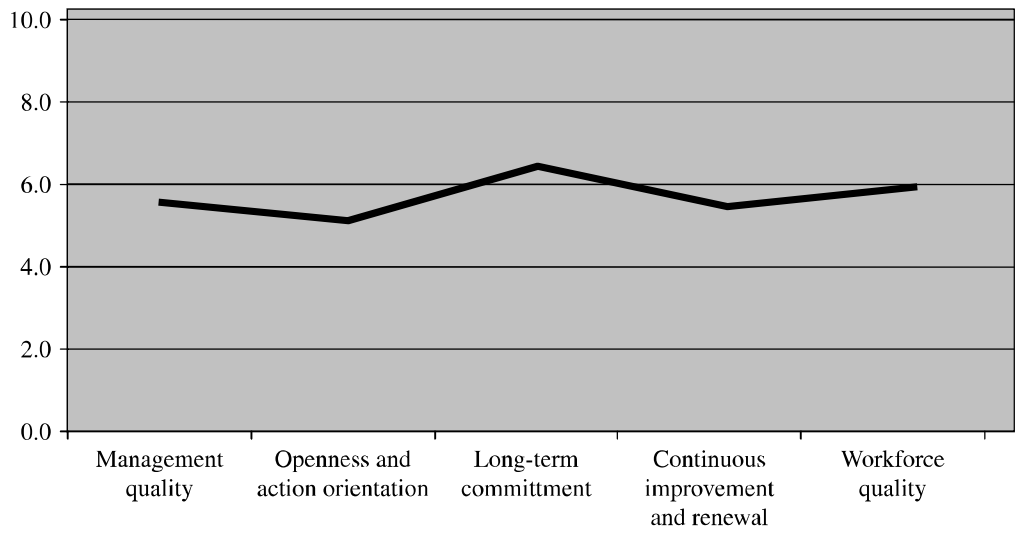


Figure 1.
HPO status of IUCo, July 2007

dialogue between management and staff and horizontal knowledge exchange between staff in the different departments. Courageous in the sense that management had to be willing to let staff experiment more and thereby probably start making more mistakes from which they could learn. At the same time, staff had to be willing to start experimenting and have the courage to start new things (and in the process make mistakes). Second, management quality (score: 5, 6) had to be improved. IUCo's management had to become a role model for staff (score: 5, 0) by amongst other things, applying fast action taking (score: 5, 1) and coaching staff to achieve better results (score: 5, 0). This meant that IUCo's management had to become more inspirational. At the same time, staff also had to improve by becoming more resilient and flexible (score: 4, 7) so they could be coached to better performance. Third, IUCo had to improve its focus on continuous improvement and renewal (score: 5, 4). For this, IUCo had to make sure that the organisation's performance was explicitly reported (score: 4, 7) to everybody in the organisation (score: 4, 0). Also, IUCo's processes had to be continuously simplified (score: 5, 0) and aligned (score: 5, 0). This meant that IUCo had to continue with strategic performance management and start with process management. During the workshop, a start was made with improving the HPO factors. Management chose for updating the strategic objectives, critical success factors (CSFs) and key performance indicators (KPIs) because it was felt that with clearer strategic objectives and measurements people in IUCo would have a better grip on what was expected from them. The reformulation of the strategic objectives was accompanied by a discussion about the performance-driven behaviour which IUCo's management and employees had to show in order to achieve the strategic objectives successfully. Appendix 2 gives an overview of the old objectives, the new updated objectives, and the corresponding CSFs and KPIs.

Results of the 2009 HPO workshop

In February 2009, IUCo's management asked the authors to review IUCo's progress in its transition to becoming an HPO. During the review meeting, the current HPO status of IUCo, results achieved so far with regard to the strategic objectives, and possible recommendations for further improvements were discussed. The HPO questionnaire was

distributed and filled in by 70 managers, academics and employees of IUCo. To get more background information, interviews were conducted with three managers, five employees and three students, and a workshop was held with almost 100 IUCo managers, academics and employees. Figure 2 shows the HPO status of IUCo of February 2009 compared with IUCo's status of July 2007.

As Figure 2 shows, there is no difference in scores which was unexpected as the organisation had been working on improving its performance. A closer look revealed that the group of respondents in 2009 differed from that of 2007, not only in size (65 and 30, respectively) but also in nature (managers and staff in 2009 versus only managers in 2007). Thus, for a more fair comparison, the scores of only the managers were extracted from the 2009 respondent group (15 respondents) and compared with the 2007 scores.

As Figure 3 shows, the HPO lines for both years have the same shape, entailing that IUCo's organisation and culture have not changed dramatically in the past 18 months. However, the HPO status of 2009 shows a distinct improvement compared to the 2007 status, meaning that the 2009 respondent group was of the opinion that IUCo had improved its performance between 2007 and 2009. During the interviews the opinion of management was corroborated by IUCo's staff, who were also of the opinion that the organisation had improved considerably. The improvement was especially noticeable for the "long-term orientation" HPO factor. This could be explained by the ten strategic objectives of IUCo which were identified and updated during the 2007 workshop and which mostly had to do with stakeholders. Because IUCo had been geared toward achieving these objectives, it could be expected that improvements would show on these objectives. This is discussed in more detail in the next section.

IUCo's performance in the 2007-2009 period

According to the HPO definition, a HPO should achieve financial and non-financial results that are better than those of other comparable organisations over a period of time of at least five to ten years. As no official competitive analysis has been made of the other

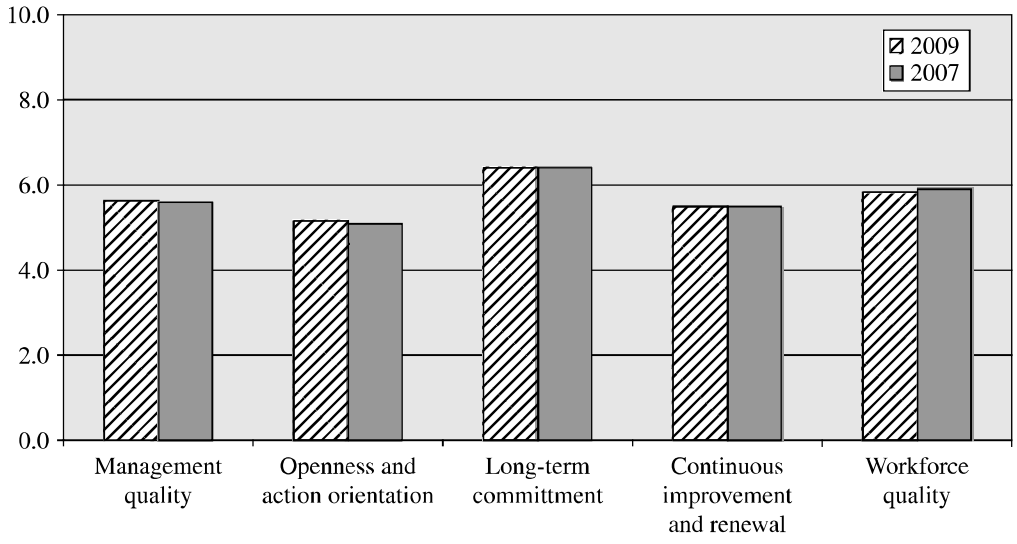
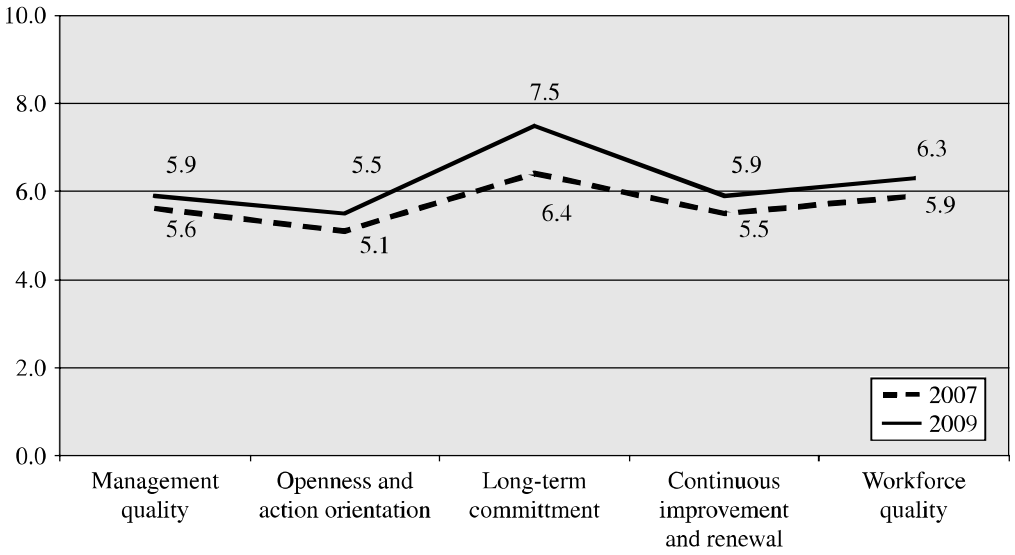


Figure 2.
HPO status of IUCo, 2007 and 2009

Note: All respondents



Note: Only management

Figure 3.
HPO status of IUCo, July 2007 and August 2009

universities in East Africa and the fact that the elapsed time since the previous HPO session has only been 18 months, it was not possible to ascertain whether IUCo fitted the HPO definition fully. It was however possible to review the results that IUCo had achieved in the 2007-2009 period. As could be seen from the increased HPO status, this review showed that IUCo had improved on many points. The organisation was financially stable and experienced an increase in student enrolment. Many new students and new faculty were transferring from other universities to IUCo and IUCo alumni were hired more than ever before to teach at other universities or to work in government. IUCo's staff was doing more research than in 2007 and had increased publications. Furthermore, IUCo had been chosen to participate in a Tanzanian-wide quality assurance pilot. And most important: the interviews held during the review revealed that students were proud to be studying at IUCo.

When looking in more detail at IUCo's ten strategic objectives as defined in 2007, the organisation had moved forward on these too:

(1) *Rank (in quality reputation) among the top ten peer East African universities by the year 2011/2012.* Management put the following actions in place to achieve this objective: a review of the quality of programmes offered by IUCo and a plan for the 2007-2012 period for further development of the academic staff.

(2) *Achieve national and international recognition and awareness by the year 2011/2012.* IUCo had been nationally recognized since 2005 and there will be new charters soon. IUCo staff had been asked to be on validation committees and alumni of IUCo were teaching at other universities. Internationally, IUCo had links to several universities worldwide, and inter national researchers now came to IUCo to do joint research.

(3) *Recruit and retain more students, especially female.* The enrolment of students had increased from 2,526 in 2008 to 2,720 in 2009. The rate of student retention

was also good, not many students were dropping out (5 per cent). There was no further news about the gender division of students.

(4) *Raise the education quality experience to match the increasing education cost.* IUCo was adding more programmes, some of which were the first to be offered in Tanzania.

(5) *Be within at least 80 per cent of the national recommended facility specifications by 2011/2012.* A huge extension of the library, including a digital centre, was being built so it would become the research centre for the southern region. In addition, more lecture theatres were planned to be built to facilitate the increased student enrolment.

(6) *Attain 80 per cent of client satisfaction by the end of 2011/2012.* In regard to students, there was no specific information at this time. In regard to academic staff, its compensation had been increased and a management development programme was in place.

(7) Register at least 80 per cent in provision of students' welfare. More and better student accommodation and dormitories were planned.

(8) *Attain a budget of at least 20 per cent non-fee of the total income by the year 2011/2012.* IUCo was still completely dependant on student tuition fees, so this objective was not reached. IUCo was looking for alternatives, such as participating in projects which would generate income (e.g. the Institution of Agriculture) and setting up a Consultancy Bureau with its own director.

(9) Design and carry out at least 15 community sensitive researches by 2011/2012 and be actively involved in at least two substantial ongoing community-based programmes at any one time by the year 2011/2012. Many programmes were established which involve the community. For instance, IT students help businesses with activities like advertising, IT workshops were being conducted at youth centres, and the law faculty was giving legal advice to people.

(10) *Design appropriate organization structure and schedule all IUCo meetings.* A new organizational structure was developed and proposed by IUCo's management, and was waiting on approval for the Tumaini board of directors to be put in place.

IUCo's improvement points

It could be stated that IUCo was gaining a growing reputation as a quality institution. At the same time, as the HPO scores in Figure 3 show, IUCo was still a long way from being a real HPO. The organization had grown the last 18 months from childhood to adolescence, and subsequently had to grow to adulthood to become a sustainable high performer. As the interviews showed, the spirit to become an HPO was present among IUCo staff and many initiatives were undertaken in many places, but at the same time the sparks had to be guided as many of these initiatives were not directed and management supervision had to be tightened. The main issue for IUCo was therefore to increase the professionalism of the organisation in the next few years. The improvement points are discussed individually in the following paragraphs:

- *Improvement point 1: improve the dialogue process.* IUCo's management and staff are both moving toward HPO but at different speeds. This became evident from the

fact that both groups had been undertaken various initiatives to improve the university but these initiatives were hardly coordinated nor communicated to each other. For instance, the validity of investments proposed and discussed by management was measured by whether these contributed to one of the IUCo's ten strategic objectives and some – possibly good – initiatives were rejected if they did not. However, staff did not know about this process, nor did they partake in it and therefore they did not understand why some projects were approved and others not. At the same time, staff was engaged in projects which were not communicated upwards to management, so management was frequently surprised by what was going on in the organization. As there were no regular, official status and progress meetings between management and faculties, there was no mechanism to prevent the aforementioned from happening time and time again. The conclusion was that more dialogue was needed on both sides, so that the complete organization would "sit in one bus going toward HPO". The emphasis had to be here on dialogue, not so much on communication as dialogue to entail that both groups listen to each other in earnest and contemplate what has been said, and if needed change their plans to incorporate the suggestions put forward by others.

- *Improvement point 2: translate IUCo's strategic process to lower organisational levels.* After the 2007 workshop, the management team of IUCo took the ten strategic objectives very seriously and used these as a guideline during their action-taking. However, no structured translation of the strategic objectives was made to and by lower levels and no follow-on meetings with staff have been held on the implementation of the strategic objectives. As a result, IUCo's progress on the execution of the strategic objectives was largely unknown to lower levels, and lower levels were not guided by faculty objectives and departmental objectives. This had created a strategy gap between the various levels of the organisation. In conclusion, what was needed was the translation of the strategic objectives and their CSFs and KPIs to faculty and department levels, and regular progress meetings on the execution of the strategic, faculty and departmental objectives.
- *Improvement point 3: close IUCo's planning and control cycle.* From the interviews of the 2009 visit, it became clear that many staff members did not receive regular updates on what was going on at IUCo (neither financial and non-financial reports nor meetings) and on the status of the execution of strategic objectives and the status of other departments. At the same time, many staff members experienced a great freedom to do what they wanted because regular review meetings with higher management occurred infrequently or not at all. People at IUCo were therefore not held accountable for their progress and results. It could be concluded that IUCo's planning and control cycle had to be closed by conducting regular evaluation, progress and feedback sessions with management and staff.
- *Improvement point 4: improve IUCo's teamwork.* It was clear that IUCo wanted to be an HPO and that many people of the organization tried to be high-performing individuals. What, however, was missing at IUCo was that management, staff, and all faculties should have been doing this as a team. The conclusion was that more teamwork and a better team feeling were needed to make the transition to HPO more efficient and speedy.

Conclusion

The competition among universities (public and private) in Tanzania and East Africa is increasing. Competing for the number of students is useless for IUCo as other universities are admitting vast numbers of new students. This in itself is not a problem as being an HPO does not necessarily mean that a university has to be the biggest, i.e. has to have the largest enrolment. It does however mean that a university necessarily has to be the best. This means that IUCo should not compete on quantity but on quality: high-quality education provided by a high-quality faculty, supported by high-quality management and high-quality staff, and delivering high-quality alumni. Since the 2007 workshop IUCo has worked on improving the long-term orientation of the university by identifying and formulating its ten strategic objectives and by working on achieving these. As the considerably improved HPO score for long-term orientation in Figure 3 shows, this course of action has worked well for IUCo. Now the time has come to start working on improving the scores for openness and action orientation and continuous improvement by making IUCo a more professional organisation by working on the improvement points described in this article. The next review of the HPO status and the progress made by IUCo is planned for 2011/2012. The organisation is determined to show that by that time its strategic objectives will have been fully achieved and that consequently its HPO status will have improved further.

The research described in this paper shows that the HPO framework can be used to assess the strength and improvement progress of an educational institution. Combined with interviews and workshops, the framework also provides information on the improvement points the educational institution needs to work at. In this respect, the HPO framework may help a university to focus on what is really important to improve and thereby fosters the improvement process. At the same time, the research described in this paper shows that the quality of management and the quality of the dialogue process are of paramount importance for a successful transition to HPO and therefore the implementation of modern management techniques deserves the utmost attention (Makkar *et al.*, 2008). Therefore, the research question posed at the beginning of this article, "Can the HPO-framework be applied in the higher education sector so that it can help improve the performance of universities?", can be answered affirmatively. This means that other universities can use the HPO framework in their quest to becoming world-class, as the framework gives them the factors to focus on in order to increase their performance.

A warning is, however, in order here. The difficulties in creating a world-class university in Africa, even when using the HPO framework, should not be underestimated. As Wang (2001) points out there are additional factors that influence the chances of success which should be taken into account, like the limited degree of openness in African culture, the relative undemocratic leadership in many African institutions including universities, the academic autonomy to which many African cultures are not yet used, and the resulting difficulties in attracting top professors and students to African universities. These difficulties then call not only for initiatives to create world-class universities but also for creating high-performance partners, like government, investors, employers, society, in the complete educational value chain (Makkar *et al.*, 2008) in order to create a truly high-quality educational sector in Africa. This provides opportunities for further research. First, the application of the HPO framework could be tested at other universities, both in Tanzania and in other African

countries. In addition, longitudinal research should focus on identifying whether the increase in performance at IUCo is lasting. Finally, research could evaluate whether and how much involving the partners in value chain of a university improves the overall quality of the higher education sector.

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Appendix 1. The HPO factors and their aspects

In the first column of this appendix, the 35 HPO characteristics are listed for each of the five HPO factors. The last two columns show the scores for IUCo in 2007 and 2009.

HPO characteristic	2007	2009
Continuous improvement and renewal		
1. The organisation has adopted a strategy that sets it clearly apart from other organisations	6.8	6.8
2. In the organisation, processes are continuously improved	6.3	6.2
3. In the organisation, processes are continuously simplified	5.1	6.5
4. In the organisation, processes are continuously aligned	5.0	6.1
5. In the organisation, everything that matters to performance is explicitly reported	4.8	5.1
6. In the organisation, both financial and non-financial information is reported to organisational members	4.0	4.5
7. The organisation continuously innovates its core competencies	5.9	5.9
8. The organisation continuously innovates its products, processes and services	5.9	6.2
Openness and action orientation		
9. Management frequently engages in a dialogue with employees	4.5	5.1
10. Organisational members spend much time on communication, knowledge exchange and learning	4.7	4.6
11. Organisational members are always involved in important processes	5.1	5.6
12. Management allows making mistakes	4.7	5.7
13. Management welcomes change	5.8	6.8
14. The organisation is performance driven	6.0	6.0
Management quality		
15. Management is trusted by organisational members	5.8	6.3
16. Management has integrity	6.3	6.5
17. Management is a role model for organisational members	5.1	6.1
18. Management applies fast decision making	5.4	5.7
19. Management applies fast action taking	5.1	5.6
20. Management coaches organisational members to achieve better results	5.1	6.3
21. Management focuses on achieving results	6.2	5.9
22. Management is very effective	4.9	5.7
23. Management applies strong leadership	5.6	6.2
24. Management is confident	6.2	7.0
25. Management is decisive with regard to non-performers	5.1	4.3
Workforce quality		
26. Management always holds organisational members responsible for their results	5.8	5.3
27. Management inspires organisational members to accomplish extraordinary results	5.5	5.6
28. Organisational members are trained to be resilient and flexible	4.8	7.2
29. The organisation has a diverse and complementary workforce	7.0	6.1
Long-term orientation		
30. The organisation grows through partnerships with suppliers and/or customers	6.6	7.2
31. The organisation maintains good and long-term relationships with all stakeholders	6.9	7.5
32. The organisation is aimed at servicing the customers as best as possible	8.0	7.8
33. Management has been with the company for a long time	6.4	7.3
34. New management is promoted from within the organisation	4.8	8.3
35. The organisation is a secure workplace for organisational members	5.8	6.8

Table AI.

Appendix 2. Updated strategic objectives of IUCo

This appendix shows for each strategic objective from IUCo's strategic plan 2007/2008-2011/2012 whether and how it has been updated during the 2007 workshop, as well as the result and effort CSFs and KPIs with which it can be measured.

1. Rank among the top ten peer East African universities by the year 2011/2012

Updated objective: to be ranked among the top ten peer East African universities by the year 2011/2012.

Result CSF: ranked among the top ten peer East African universities..

Results KPI 1: results from review missions (which are normally held once every three years).

Results KPI 2: relative employability at good companies in the region of IUCo graduates compared to other universities.

Results KPI 3: number of applicants and students from other East African countries to IUCo versus total number of applicants and students to IUCo, compared to other East African universities.

Effort CSF: attracted gender-balanced quality lecturers and researchers.

Effort KPI 1: 20 per cent of academic staff with PhDs, 60 per cent with Masters, and 20 per cent with first degrees recruited (Note: Check with accreditation requirements).

Effort KPI 2: attractive incentives in place to keep the highly qualified recruited staff.

Effort KPI 3: average tenure of IUCo staff compared to other East African universities.

Effort KPI 4: ratio male/female staff.

Effort KPI 5: ratio lecturers/students.

Effort KPI 6: number of scientific publications (papers and presentations).

2. Achieve national and international recognition and awareness by the year 2011/2012

Updated objective: to maintain national and achieve international recognition and awareness by the year 2011/2012.

Result CSF: recognized by national and international accreditation bodies.

Results KPI 1: maintained recognition by TCU (Tanzania Commission for Universities).

Results KPI 2: recognition by the public.

Result CSF: accredited by national and international bodies.

Results KPI 1: number of programmes nationally accredited (Note: target = all programmes).

Results KPI 2: number of programmes internationally accredited (Note: target = at least one programme).

Effort CSF: productive national and international cooperation.

Effort KPI 1: joint successful activities with higher education bodies and professional associations.

Effort KPI 2: joint research published in international journals.

Effort KPI 3: joint research presented at international conferences.

Effort KPI 4: promotions in mass media, locally, regionally and internationally.

3. Recruit and retain 95 per cent of division one male and division one and two female students by the year 2011/2012

Updated objective: admit and retain 95 per cent of high-potential students by the year 2011/2012.

Result CSF: admitted and retained high-potential students.

Results KPI 1: number of division one and two female and male students versus total number of IUCo students.

Results KPI 2: number of students with equivalent qualifications from national and international accredited colleges and universities versus total number of IUCo students.

Results KPI 3: number first and upper second class students for postgraduates studies versus total number of IUCo students.

Effort CSF: sound admission policy in place.

Effort KPI 1: shortened admission time.

Effort KPI 2: marketing programmes at national and international levels.

Effort KPI 3: students satisfied about quality of teaching.

4. Raise the education quality experience to match the increasing education cost

Updated objective: raise the education quality.

Result CSF: enhanced education quality.

Results KPI 1: promoted learning through real-life tasks.

Results KPI 2: education programmes responsive to market/community and students needs.

Effort CSF: linked teaching and research with community/market and students.

Effort KPI 1: number of new/revised programs in the curriculum.

Effort KPI 2: research findings incorporated in teaching.

Effort KPI 3: partnership and exchange programs (students, staff, exams) with reputable universities.

Effort KPI 4: market/community and students participation in developing programs.

Effort KPI 5: high-quality supervised field work.

5. Be within at least 80 per cent of the national recommended facility specifications by 2011/2012

Updated objective: to be ranked among the top ten peer East African universities by the year 2011/2012 in university core infrastructure facilities.

Result CSF: ranked among the top ten peer East African universities for high-quality university core infrastructure.

Results KPI 1: results from review missions.

Effort CSF: improved university core facilities.

Effort KPI 1: library with more than 50 per cent access by clients (students and staff) 24 hours per day.

Effort KPI 2: spacious well-equipped theatres each accommodating 200 students (Note: target = 7).

Effort KPI 3: ICT facility which can accommodate 25 per cent of the client population 24 hours per day.

Effort KPI 4: well-equipped cafeteria that can accommodate at least 500 clients at any given time.

Effort KPI 5: office facilities that can accommodate at least 200 staff at any given time.

Effort KPI 6: standard recreational facilities.

Effort KPI 7: laboratory facilities (in a broad sense).

6. Attain 80 per cent of client satisfaction by the end of 2011/2012

Updated objective: to be ranked among the top ten peer East African universities by the year 2011/2012 in stakeholder satisfaction.

Result CSF: ranked among the top ten peer East African universities for stakeholder satisfaction.

Results KPI 1: student stakeholder satisfaction (Note: target = 80 per cent).

Results KPI 2: staff satisfaction (Note: target = 80 per cent).

Results KPI 3: reduced number of stakeholder complaints (Note: target = 80 per cent).

Results KPI 4: Increased enrolment of highly qualified students.

Results KPI 5: increased retained staff.

Effort CSF: increased service level.

Effort KPI 1: reduced time to handle complaints.

Effort KPI 2: increased timeliness of critical decision making.

Effort KPI 3: number of consultations with stakeholders.

7. Register at least 80 per cent in provision of students welfare

Updated objective: register 80 per cent in provision of students welfare.

Result CSF: improved student welfare.

Results KPI 1: student satisfaction in regard to their welfare.

Effort CSF: improved varsity health (physical, mental and spiritual) policy.

Effort KPI 1: 100 per cent access to health service.

Effort KPI 2: critical health information to students.

Effort KPI 3: facilitation of health/medical service provision.

Effort KPI 4: career counselling.

Effort KPI 5: graduation awards.

Effort KPI 6: active alumni.

Effort CSF: improved and increase sports and game facilities.

Effort KPI 1: better sport and game facilities.

Effort KPI 2: student sports day.

Effort KPI 3: number of students in interfaculty games and awards.

Effort CSF: affordable student accommodations.

Effort KPI 1: effective accommodation service by the Dean.

Effort KPI 2: effective accommodation policy.

8. Attain a budget of at least 20 per cent non-fee of the total income by the year 2011/2012

Updated objective: attain budget for current and development activities.

Result CSF: full financial coverage.

Results KPI 1: current financial coverage.

Results KPI 2: development financial coverage.

Effort CSF: reduced dependency on student fees.

Effort KPI 1: increased student income.

Effort KPI 2: increased staff welfare because of monetary incentives.

Effort KPI 3: increased training, knowledge transfer and service to society.

Effort CSF: strategic income generating activities.

Effort KPI 1: increased income from research, consultancy, short courses and investments.

9. Design and carry out at least 15 community sensitive researches by 2011/2012 and be actively involved in at least two substantial ongoing community-based programs at any one time by the year 2011/2012

Updated objective: enhance corporate social responsibility by carrying out, jointly with the community, community sensitive researches and community-based programmes.

Result CSF: enhanced institutional social responsibility.

Results KPI 1: increased awareness by the community of IUCo and its programmes.

Results KPI 2: high demand by the community for IUCo's programmes.

Result CSF: improved environment.

Results KPI 1: to be decided.

Effort CSF: research findings reflected in community-based programmes.

Effort KPI 1: conducted community-sensitive researches (Note: target = 15).

Effort KPI 2: conducted community-based researches (Note: target = 2).

10. Design appropriate organization structure and schedule all IUCo meetings

Updated objective: design efficient and effective organizational structure.

Result CSF: simple organizational structure.

Results KPI 1: stakeholders satisfaction with communication.

Results KPI 2: strengthened clear line of authority and responsibility.

Effort CSF: institutional manuals in place and operational.

Effort KPI 1: manuals disseminated to stakeholders.

Effort KPI 2: conducted orientation seminars and workshops (Note: target = 10).

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