






## Expanding Educational Opportunities in Private Universities and its Impact on Social Inclusion and Diversity in Public Universities in Western Uganda

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**Abstract:** The research explored the impact of advancing education opportunities in private universities on diversity and social inclusion in public universities in western Uganda. Institutional logic theory underpinned social inclusion and diversity in public universities, whereas marketization, neoliberalism, and institutional theories anchored opportunity expansion. The study adopted a cross-sectional design and quantitative approach. Seven hundred and forty-eight (748) lecturers constituted the target population, from which a sample of 302 responders was obtained. Information was collected through the Questionnaire. Data was analysed using Pearson r correlation coefficient at an alpha level of .05. Expanding opportunities and promoting social inclusion and diversity were found to be positively correlated ( $r(278) = .54, p = .030$ ). The study concluded that social inclusion and diversity in public universities are positively correlated with the expansion of educational opportunities in private universities. The study recommended that, government implements policies that promote diversity and inclusion and prioritise funding for public universities.

**Keywords:** Social Inclusion, Diversity, Institutional Logics

### 1. Introduction

According to Altbach, Reisberg, and Rumbley (2019), private institutions have played a significant role in expanding access to higher education, particularly in regions where public universities have constraints related to space or money. They usually provide innovative curricula, flexible scheduling, and specialized topic areas unavailable at public universities (Altbach et al., 2019). Aspects such as geography, job schedules, or academic preparation many times prevent some individuals from taking advantage of opportunities that private colleges provide (Rodríguez, González-Monteagudo, & Padilla-Carmona, 2021). Nonetheless, the extent to which they promote social inclusion vary substantially depending on factors such as tuition fees, financial aid availability, and admission standards (Rodríguez et al., 2021).

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Diversity at public universities may be impacted by the growth of private colleges in both positive and bad ways (Carpentier, 2021). On the one hand, transfer or exchange programs at private colleges may draw students from a variety of backgrounds who enhance the diversity of the student body at public universities (Carpentier, 2021). Private universities may worsen socioeconomic gaps in higher education and promote racial, ethnic, or class inequality, in accordance with Carpenter (2021), if its main student body consists of wealthy or privileged individuals. Furthermore, they have the potential to put public institutions under competition, which would force them to innovate and enhance their current products in order to stay in business (Riccomini, Cirani, Pedro, Garzaro, & Kevin, 2021). But it can also encourage cooperation through alliances, group research projects, and information exchanges, which will eventually help students and society at large (Riccomini et al., 2021). Policymakers frequently grapple with how to strike a balance between the expansion of private universities and the need for assured fair admittance for all people to higher education through regulatory measures to promote inexpensive, answerability, and openness in private higher education without relenting on efforts to strengthen public universities as engines of social mobility and economic development (Arnhold & Bassett, 2021).

Public universities in Africa often have their roots in institutions established during the colonial era (Abrokwa, 2017). According to Abrokwa (2017), these universities were primarily founded by colonial powers to serve the needs of the colonial administration, including the training of local elites for administrative and clerical roles. After independence, many African countries embarked on establishment and expansion of public universities to fill the gaps resulting in exit of the colonialists (Bondarenko, 2023). In addition to training personnel to take over jobs left by the colonialists, public universities in Africa were meant to promote Pan-Africanism and intellectual discourse during the post- independence period (Bondarenko, 2023; Taye, 2021).

In as much as Public Universities in Africa wanted to expand, be autonomous, and achieve academic freedom, there were challenges such as: funding; infrastructure; and faculty capacity (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2017; Mushemeza, 2016). Several factors including rapid population growth, limited government resources, political instability; and government control over academic institutions are attributed to this phenomenon according to Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2017) and Mushemeza (2016). Many African governments implemented policies targeted at reorganizing higher education systems and advancing market-oriented changes in response to globalization and neoliberal economic reforms in the late 20th and early 21st century (Woldegiorgis, 2024).

### **1.1 Theoretical Background**

The idea of "institutional logics" is one theoretical angle that can be used to comprehend the ramifications of advancing fairness and admittance to university education vide non-government aided colleges in Africa (Sun & Liang, 2021). The socially built patterns of thought, values, and practices known as institutional logics are what direct an organization's behavior and decision-making inside a specific institutional setting (Cai & Mountford, 2022). Objectives, standards, and practices for government and non- government aided colleges are shaped by institutional logics in the context of higher education, which affects how they handle diversity, equity, and access (Friedland, 2017; Haveman & Gualtieri, 2017).

Private universities in Africa more often function under clear, but distinct institutional logics from public universities (Brewer, 2024; Buckner & Zapp, 2021). Private institutions, according to Brewer (2024) and Buckner and Zapp (2021) prioritize market-driven goals like revenue generation, efficiency, and responsiveness to consumer demands. On the other hand, public universities are guided by logics that stress public service, social welfare as well as equitable admittance to education (Daun-Barnett & John, 2018). The interaction between these different institutional logics can have implications for social inclusion and diversity within public universities (Cai & Mountford, 2022). Market logics have driven private universities to compete with public universities for: students; funding; and other materials (Warshaw & Upton, 2020; Kim, Kim, Rhee, & Kim, 2023). This competition, according to Warshaw and Upton (2020) and Kim et al. (2023) can motivate public universities to put in place mechanisms to attract and retain a student body that is diverse, thus enhancing social inclusion and diversity in their student bodies. Additionally, according to Warshaw and Upton (2020) and Kim et al. (2023), private universities have enhanced autonomy when it comes to resource allocation, something that makes them to invest in initiatives that support fairness and admittance. These mechanisms include but not limited to need-based scholarships, outreach programs, or support services for underrepresented students (Warshaw & Upton, 2020; Kim et al., 2023). Even though public universities face resource challenges, they can copy practices that have worked for private universities and implemented them (Warshaw & Upton, 2020).

There are also other examples which include cooperation, rules and policies of government that interfere with the working conditions at both public and private colleges (Scott, 2021). Affirmative action programs and funding mechanisms policies for disadvantaged students according to Scott (2021), help in influencing the behavior of both private and public universities. In spite of the separation between public and private universities in terms of institutional logics, they can still work together to address common challenges related to fairness and admittance (Gebreiter, 2022; Scott, 2021). In the opinion of Chun and Evans, 2023, both university types can collaborative in areas of joint research projects, knowledge sharing, and community engagement initiatives. Institutional logics, thus, makes it possible to gain a deeper understanding of the many ways, the rise of private universities would relate to the ways and means of public universities, thereby, interfering with the prospects for enhancing diversity, fairness, and admittance. This argument is in line with the arguments of (Baker-Shelley, Van Zeijl-Rozema, & Martens, 2017).

## **1.2 Conceptual Background**

Institutional complementarity is used to understand the consequences of equity and admittance in advancing higher education opportunities via private universities in Africa. In addition, Institutional complementarity can be used to comprehend the consequences social inclusion and diversity bring upon public universities (Boughey & McKenna, 2021; Chankseliani, 2022; Hagenmeier, 2021). Institutional complementarity according to Soda and Furlotti (2017), refers to a phenomenon in which a number of universities work together and fill in for another's inequity. Both public and private universities, based on this theory complement each other in many unique ways but related to enhancing diversity, equity, and access to university education in Africa (Cloete, Bunting, & Van Schalkwyk, 2018).

The emergency of private universities in Africa largely due to the rising demand for higher education which could not be fulfilled by public universities (Yoder, 2020). Private universities have provided access

to university education for students who could not get admissions in public universities (Prakhov & Bugakova, 2023). The expansion of educational opportunities through private universities has not only widened access but also diversified their student bodies (Neary & Winn, 2017). Additionally, private universities have the capability to mount customized curricula tailored to the needs of their diverse student bodies (Conlé, Kroll, Storz, & Ten Brink, 2023). The Varied educational programs offered by private universities according to Neary and Winn (2017), support the wider educational landscape in a way that provides alternative learning experiences and endearing to niche markets.

Wider programs spread in private universities has persuaded public universities to broaden their programs and services iso as to remain competitive (Musselin, 2018). At the same time, competition from private universities encourages public universities to collaborate with them. However, this kind of collaboration may lead to synergies especially with respect to tackling shared challenges (Chun & Evans, 2023). The interaction between public and private universities, potentially, can create a dynamic environment that fosters creativity and improved delivery of university education (Neary and Winn, 2017). Consequently, this collaboration leads to advances in the general aim for promotion of diversity, equity, and access to university education (Naylor & Mifsud, 2019; Chun & Evans, 2023). Although private universities can enhance access to higher education, they may equally make inequality worse (Conlé et al., 2023). This, according to Conlé et al. (2023), is so, especially if they serve largely the rich and privileged populations. Therefore, tackling issues of equity requires a detailed strategy that factors in interventions that encourage underrepresented students' achievement (Musselin, 2018). Public universities play a critical role the provision of fair opportunities for all students, regardless of their socioeconomic background through affirmative action policies (Cloete et al., 2018).

### **1.3 Contextual Perspective**

For many countries in Africa, the history of colonialism has influenced the development of their education systems (Abraham, 2020). Public universities in Africa were established during and after the colonial era (Cardoso, 2020). On the contrary, private universities, according to Tamrat (2017), have grown more recently, following flaws in the public system.

Cole (2018) claims that Africa has one of the world's fastest-growing populations, with a sizable and youthful population. The demand for higher education has surged due to this demographic trend, beyond public universities' ability to accept all eligible students (Scott & Ivala, 2019). According to Tamrat (2017), private universities have appeared to close this gap by providing more places for postsecondary education. In Africa, national governments are usually in charge of funding and regulating public institutions. These governments may have conflicting agendas and limited funding (Oketch, 2016). According to Oketch (2016), there may be a shortage of government funding for higher education, which would make it difficult to build new facilities, hire instructors, and provide student support services. Private universities are more dependent on tuition fees and private donations for funding, even though they are still governed by government rules (Wanjala et al., 2023).

Public universities in Africa often have established reputations and accreditation mechanisms to ensure academic quality and standards (Hillman & Baydoun, 2019). However, some private universities may face challenges in meeting the same level of quality assurance due to varying levels of resources, infrastructure,

and faculty expertise (Arthur & Kuranchie, 2022). Arthur and Kuranchie (2022) contend that upholding fair accrediting standards for public and private colleges is crucial to preserving the caliber of instruction and defending the rights of students. The situation is no different in western Uganda whereby the private universities struggle to get to the same quality assurance level as public university because of their limited funding source, which is tuition fees (Sempungu, 2013). According to Magumba (2018), the universities are unable to employ adequate qualified staff and remunerate them well. This has led to high turnover rate, which has had an effect on skewed staff- student ratios (Magumba, 2018).

Western Uganda is characterized by significant socio-economic disparities, with disparities in access to education being a major concern (Datzberger, 2018; Lebeau & Oanda, 2020; Nwokike & Nwadike, 2023). Private universities, with their tuition-based model, cater primarily to wealthier students, exacerbating inequalities in access to higher education (Datzberger, 2018; Odugbesan, 2017). Public universities play a critical role in providing affordable and accessible education to marginalized communities, although they also face challenges in resource allocation and capacity building (Irene & Hussain, 2021; Salmi & D'Addio, 2021).

#### **1.4 Statement of the problem**

Prior to the 1980s and 1990s, state universities in Uganda provided the majority of university education. Because all students, regardless of financial status, could take advantage of the same services on campus, the environment for social inclusion and diversity was perfect. Private universities in Western Uganda have seen a discernible increase in educational possibilities from the 1980s and 1990s. Although this expansion creates new opportunities for postsecondary education, it also prompts questions about how it can affect diversity and social inclusion in the area's public colleges. Due to the concentration of talent and resources brought about by these institutions' explosive expansion, public universities are losing students to these private ones.

Since government funding for public universities is contingent on enrolment, public universities are facing financial challenges in trying to reach full capacity (Wanjala, Mochama, & Rotich, 2023). Because private universities tend to serve students with greater financial resources, they have made access disparities worse. In contrast, public universities have historically served a more diverse student body, including members of marginalized communities and lower socioeconomic backgrounds (Wanjala et al., 2023). In the event that this situation is not changed, public universities, which mostly depend on government funding, would encounter financial difficulties and find it more difficult to uphold their high standards of performance in the face of growing competition from private colleges. There is a risk that these populations may become educated and unemployed, which will affect the government's finances and security. This context informed the conception of this study.

#### **1.5 The Study Objective**

The study's goal was to determine how much diversity and social inclusion in western Uganda's public higher education institutions related to expansion of higher education in non-government aided colleges.

### 1.7 Research Question

How does the expansion of higher education opportunities in private universities relate to diversity and social inclusion in public universities in western Uganda?

### 1.8 Research Hypothesis

$H_0$ : Diversity and social inclusion at public institutions in western Uganda are not significantly correlated with the growth of higher education possibilities in private colleges.

### 1.9 Significance

Promoting equity and equal access to private colleges in Africa is crucial for expanding educational opportunities, eradicating inequalities, fostering diversity and creativity, and reducing strain on state institutions. By working with public universities and other stakeholders, private institutions greatly enhance the quality, accessibility, and inclusion of higher education across the continent.

### 1.10 Conceptual Framework

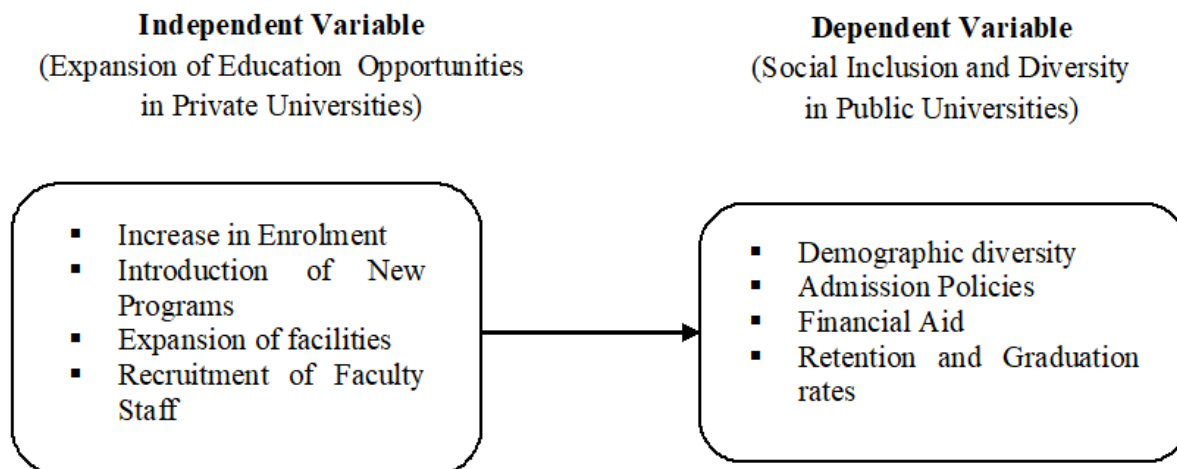


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 Shows a conceptual framework relating expansion of opportunities in private universities and its impact on social inclusion and diversity in public universities. The frame work indicates that social inclusion and diversity is directly related to the expansion of opportunities in Private universities.

## 2. Literature Review

This section addressed, theoretical review, empirical review, empirical studies and research gaps.

### 2.1 Theoretical Review

A theoretical review examined the theories underpinning the independent variable (the expansion of educational opportunities in private universities). The marketization, institutional, and neoliberalism

theories provided the basis for expansion of program choices among private universities. The marketization hypothesis highlights how competition and market pressures shape how goods and services are provided (Teixeira, 2023). Teixeira (2023) asserts that in the context of university education, it relates to the course of mixing market principles, and methods, hooked on university administration/ operation. It entails giving universities more autonomy, expanding their sources of finance, putting in place market-based graduate employment programs, and encouraging competition between academic staff and logistics suppliers (Fantauzzi, Frondizi, Colasanti, & Fiorani, 2019). The market's need for postsecondary education, which is being driven by variables including population increase, rising ambitions for higher education, and public institutions' incapacity to supply all of the demand, can be understood as the reason behind the proliferation of private colleges (Ferreya, 2017).

Conversely, neoliberalism promotes the growth of market-oriented methods to social provision and governance, as well as the privatization of public services (Toft, 2021). Neoliberal policies in the field of higher education may stimulate the expansion of private institutions as a means of enhancing market mechanisms for increasing access to education, fostering competitiveness and efficiency, and diminishing the role of the state in the delivery of education (Hastings, 2019). Institutional theory on the other hand, focuses on how institutions behave vis-a-vis their organizational structures, norms, and values (Aksom & Tymchenko, 2020). According to Aksom and Tymchenko (2020) and Mahmud (2017), institutional factors regarding education as a vehicle for development and social mobility, impacts the growth of educational opportunities private universities in Africa.

## **2.2 Empirical Review**

This section looked at what other authors have said and written about the expansion of educational opportunities in private universities and how it impacts socio inclusion and diversity in public universities in western Uganda.

### **2.2.1 Expansion of Educational Opportunities in Private Universities**

In North America, according to Buckner (2017) and Marginson (2016) social inclusion and diversity significantly affected expansion of opportunities in private universities. North American universities.

In order for private universities to attract a student body that is diverse, they often implemented admission policies that were more lenient and wider programs Spread (Smith, 2020). According to Smith (2020), elements such as colour, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic level, and country constitute diversity. Similarly, as stated by Taylor and Cantwell (2019), public universities' student populations would become diverse as private universities increased their enrolment. This phenomenon would lead to a learning environment that is inclusive (Taylor & Cantwell, 2019).

According to Damoc (2017) and Pucciarelli and Kaplan (2016), innovation and improvement in public universities was driven by competition from private universities. The response by public universities to the competition from by private universities was to: enhance outreach efforts; expand scholarship programs; and put in place mechanisms that would attract and retain students coming from diverse backgrounds that are diverse (Glynn, 2017; Morphew, Fumasoli, & Stensaker, 2018). Innovative educational approaches, interdisciplinary programs, and specialized fields of study were introduced in

private universities to counter public universities (Garde Sanchez, Rodríguez Bolívar, & López Hernandez, 2021).

The growth of private university education in the view of Farrugia and Bhandari (2020) is related to student mobility and globalization. Private universities attract students from abroad looking for specialized programs, which in turn enhances diversity within the university (Farrugia & Bhandari, 2020). Similarly, public universities, in accordance with Farrugia and Bhandari (2020), can also attract a student body that is diverse and easily accommodate them. Notably, experiences within public universities on the subject of inclusion and diversity in North America, Australia, and Asia are shaped by the growth of opportunities in private universities in equal measures (Rizvi, 2020).

Throughout Africa, inclusion and diversity in public universities have been on a great extent affected by the expansion of educational opportunities private universities (Alemu, 2014). The specific effects according to Alemu (2014), vary depending on existing local factors and institutional logics. Students facing admission challenges in public universities according to (Odhiambo, 2018; Mlambo, Mlambo, & Adetiba, 2021), easily get admitted in Private universities due to a more flexible admission criteria they have adopted. The flexible admission criteria offer alternative routes to university education, thus widening access (Mlambo, & Adetiba, 2021). Private universities have leveraged on their flexible admission criteria to attract a more diverse student body not limited to marginalized individuals but also underrepresented groups (Odhiambo, 2018). Continued expansion of educational opportunities in private universities have caused a shift in student demographics within public universities (Mlambo, Mlambo, & Adetiba, 2021). Consequently, the influx of students from diverse backgrounds has assisted public universities to become more inclusive (Mlambo et al., 2021).

### **2.3 Empirical Studies**

According to Ansarian and Mohammadi (2018), empirical studies are actual researches done on the problem under investigation. These studies gather data and perform data analysis in order to unearth the solution to the problem at hand (Junet et al., 2022). In the opinion of Junet et al. (2022), conclusions from empirical studies can be generalised with respect to specific occurrence on the basis of measurable observable information. Empirical research employs a scientific methodology to provide dependable and authentic results through a systematic collection and meticulous examination of data (Pratt et al., 2022). The study focused on the impact of increasing chances at private colleges on diversity and social inclusion in Uganda's public universities using empirical research.

Study 1: Castro, D., Gairín, J., & Rodríguez-Gómez, D. (2017). An initial examination of Latin American university exclusion standards from the viewpoint of the governing boards of the institutions 49(2), 229–247; *Education and Urban Society*. The article's goal was to gain a thorough understanding of how Latin American higher education institutions' governing boards see certain exclusionary characteristics. The study's emphasis was on diversity and inclusivity.

Study 2: Marquina, M., and Chiroleu, A. (2017). Credentialism or democratization? Latin America's public policies for higher education expansion. 139–160 in *Policy Reviews in Higher Education*, 1(2). The topic of this study was higher education expansion policies. The principal aim was to investigate the extent

and constraints of those policies. The focus of this study was on how diversity and social inclusion in public universities were affected by the growth of chances in private universities.

Study 3: Goldin, Deming, and Katz (2012). "The Impact of Profit driven colleges on the Socioeconomic Diversity of Post-secondary Education" was the title of the study. This study examined the impact of the US for-profit college boom on the socioeconomic diversity of higher education. The National Center for Education Statistics data was used by the authors to determine that a higher proportion of low-income and minority students attended for-profit colleges as opposed to public and nonprofit universities. But they also expressed concerns about the caliber of education and outcomes for students attending for-profit colleges. This study was essentially a comparison between nonprofit and for-profit colleges and public universities. This study did not look at the impact of increasing admissions in profit driven colleges on diversity and social inclusion at public universities.

Study 4: "The Role of Private Higher Education in Promoting Equity and Access: Case Studies from Developing Countries" was published by UNESCO in 2014. This research used case studies from various developing countries, including Ghana, Kenya, and South Africa, to investigate how private higher education might improve equity and access. The case studies illustrated how minority groups, including low-income and rural students, have been given additional opportunities by private universities, which have also increased diversity in the higher education system. This study focused on improving fairness and access rather than the impact on diversity and social inclusion in public universities.

Study 5: UNESCO (2010) conducted a study titled "Private Higher Education and Social Inclusion in Latin America". This study examined social inclusion initiatives being implemented by private higher education institutions in Latin America. Utilizing local case studies and actual data, the authors looked at how private institutions have expanded traditionally marginalized groups' access to higher education, such as low-income communities and indigenous peoples. They did, however, also bring up issues with the cost and caliber of private schooling. This study disregarded public higher education in favor of focusing on social inclusion in private higher education.

## **2.4 Research Gaps**

Secondary data were used in much of the studies. Empirical study is necessary to assess if the expansion of private colleges has had an impact on the social composition of students attending public universities. Primary data will be used in this study to methodically examine enrolment trends at both Uganda's public and non- public universities. It would, additionally, examine trends in socioeconomic status, gender, and geographic location of students. Understanding how the expansion of private higher education options affects diversity and social inclusion in public universities is also crucial.

## **3. Research Methodology**

The research: paradigm; design; approach; area; target population; sampling procedure; sample size; instruments; piloting; instrument validity; instrument reliability; data collection process; and the researcher's ethical considerations, were among the specific topics covered under research methodology.

### 3.1 Research Design

A Cross-sectional research design was used because, it allows data to be collected simultaneously from a population, sample, or group of respondents (Wang & Cheng, 2020). They contend that a cross-sectional design captures a fleeting image of the characteristics, behaviors, or environments of the research participants. Surveys, questionnaires, interviews, observations, and/or a combination of these are among the methods of data gathering that cross-sectional research employ, in their opinion. Which strategy is optimal depends on the study's design and research question, according to Halkias and Neubert (2020).

### 3.2 Research Approach

A quantitative research strategy was used in this study because the researcher was interested in the relationship between expansion of educational opportunities in private universities and its impact on diversity and social inclusion in public universities in western Uganda. Comprehending the link in a population between an independent variable and one or more dependent variables is the main objective of quantitative research investigations. Quantitative research yields objective data that is easily understood when presented in numerical and statistical form.

### 3.3 Target Population

The intended audience included both public and private universities in Western Uganda. Two state universities and two private chartered universities were located in Western Uganda (MOE, 2016). For reasons of confidentiality, their names were not disclosed; instead, the universities were represented by the letters of the alphabet, A through D.

Table 1: *Target Population*

Universities	Status		Number of Lecurers
	Private	Public	
A	√		198
B		√	220
C		√	170
D	√		160
Total			748

Source: Primary Data

### 3.4 Sample Size

The Yamane (1967) equation,  $n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$  was applied in finding the sample size. From the equation, n stands for the size, while, N represents the target population. e is the margin of error. Substituting N in the equation by 748 and e by 0.05,  $n = \frac{748}{1+748 \times (.05)^2} = 302$

### 3.5 Sampling Procedure

A sample was obtained from the population using Yamane's formula of 1967 ( $n = \frac{N}{1+N(e^2)}$ ). The population was divided into Private chartered and public universities. Based on their numbers, the number of lecturers from each university that would be included in the sample was calculated proportionately before being chosen at random. Based on the percentage of lecturers from each university in the overall number of lecturers, a proportionate sample of professors from public universities and lecturers from private chartered universities was selected. Each school's sample of lecturers was chosen at random. A sample of 302 people was chosen from the 748 people in the target demographic. By dividing the total number of lecturers across all four universities by the number of lecturers at the two public universities, and then multiplying the result by the sample size, the number of lecturers from public universities in the sample was determined (i.e.  $\frac{390}{748} \times 302 = 157$ ). The number of Lecturers in the sample from private chartered universities was obtained by subtracting 157 from 302 to get 145.

The number of Lecturers in universities A, B, C, and D were;  $\frac{198}{358} \times 145 = 80$ ,

$\frac{220}{390} \times 157 = 89$ ,  $\frac{170}{390} \times 157 = 68$ , and  $\frac{160}{358} \times 145 = 65$  respectively.

Table 2: Sample size

Universities	Status		Number of Lecurers	Sample
	Private	Public		
A	√		198	80
B		√	220	89
C		√	170	68
D	√		160	65
Total			748	302

Source: Primary Data

### 3.6 Research Instruments

A self-administered questionnaire (SAQ) on a four-point Likert scale was employed for this quantitative study. Given that the study's purpose was to gather non-sensitive data, a four-point Likert scale was chosen over a five-point one.

### 3.7 Data collection Procedure

The Research Ethics Committee (REC) granted approval to the researcher. Following that, the researcher received permission to conduct the study from each university.

### 3.8 Data quality Control

By evaluating the instrument's validity and reliability, data quality control was carried out (questionnaire)

### 3.8.1 Validity of the Instruments

According to Creswell (2011), validity refers to an instrument's strength that is determined by how correct the findings are from the perspectives of the researcher, the participant, and the research readers. The researcher employed content-related evidence of validity to demonstrate the instruments' validity. The questionnaire items were cross-checked by the researcher for consistency, relevance, and clarity with respect to the study objectives, after consulting with other experts in the field of school management.

### 3.8.2 Reliability of the Instruments

The extent to which a specific measuring tool produces similar answers over several repeated trials is called instrument reliability (Kothari et al., 2012). The researcher conducted a pretest of the research instruments on a subset of respondents from two additional universities, one private and one public, that were not included in the study so as to validate the reliability of the instruments. Thirty professors from the two universities participated in the pre-test. Since they made up 10% of the sample. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient approach was used to analyze reliability.

### 3.9 Data Analysis

In order to guarantee that every question was asked accurately, uniformly, completely, and consistently, the researcher modified the questionnaire. After tabulating and coding, both descriptive and inferential statistics were used for analysis. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to examine the quantitative data from the surveys. Pearson correlation, or  $r$ , and frequency distributions and means were among the tools used.

## 4. Result and discussion

### 4.1 Descriptive Statistics

This part included the respondents' replies on each of the factors (consistently on time attendance, consistently high academic achievement, productive study sessions, and students' academic success) as well as the mean and standard deviation of the variables.

#### 4.1.1 Mean and Standard deviation of the variables

Expanded opportunities and influence on social inclusion and diversity were the study's two variables, and Table 3 displays their mean and standard deviation.

Table 3: Mean and standard Deviation of the variables

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Expansion of opportunities	3.035	.4883
Social inclusion and Diversity	2.477	.246

Source: Primary Data

#### 4.1.2 Expansion of opportunities and impact on social Inclusion and Diversity

Table 4 shows the respondents responses on Expansion of opportunities in private universities.

Table 4: Expansion of opportunities in private universities

Questionnaire Item	SD	D	A	SA	Mean
1. The expansion of opportunities in private universities contributes to social inclusion and diversity.	91	85	75	29	2.150
2. The availability of scholarships and financial aid in private universities impacts access to education for underrepresented groups in public universities	22	35	43	180	3.357
3. Initiatives promoting collaboration between private and public universities enhance social inclusion and diversity in higher education	23	34	93	130	2.643
4. Outreach programs by private universities are effective in attracting students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds to public universities	60	45	110	65	3.99
5. The expansion of opportunities in private universities narrow the gap in access to quality education between different socio-economic groups	20	41	82	137	3.057

Source: Primary Data

Table 4's findings show that 91 (33%); 85 (30%); 75 (27%); and 29 (10%) of the respondents showed strong disagreement, disagreement, agreement, and strong agreement, respectively, about the contribution of expanded chances at private colleges to diversity and social inclusion in public universities in western Uganda. Overall, 104 (37 %) of the respondents in one way or another agreed while 176 (63 %) disagreed that the expansion of opportunities in private universities contributes to social inclusion and diversity in public universities western Uganda. The responses on this item had a mean of 2.150, which was an indication of a disagreement with the statement.

Regarding the responses to the question of whether the availability of financial aid and scholarships in private universities affects underrepresented groups' access to higher education in public universities, the following percentages of respondents disagreed, agreed, strongly disagreed, and disagreed: 22 (8%), 35 (13%), 43 (15%), and 180 (64%) of the respondents strongly disagreed. Overall, 223 (79 %) of the respondents agreed while 57 (21 %) disagreed with the statement. These responses had a mean of 3.357, which indicated agreement with the statement.

In response to the inquiry asking them to state whether they believed programs encouraging cooperation between private and public institutions improved diversity and social inclusion in higher education, they gave the following answers: 23 (8%), 34 (12%), 93 (33%), and 130 (47%) of the respondents disagreed, agreed, disagreed, and strongly disagreed that programs encouraging private-public university collaboration improve diversity and social inclusion in higher education. Initiatives encouraging cooperation between private and public institutions improve social inclusion and diversity in higher education, according to 227 (80%) respondents overall, while 57 (20%) disagreed. The mean of their answers was 2.63, indicating some degree of agreement.

Regarding the inquiry regarding the efficacy of private colleges' outreach efforts in drawing students from varied socioeconomic backgrounds to public universities, their answers were as follows: The percentage of respondents who strongly disagreed, disagreed, agreed, and strongly agreed that outreach activities offered by private institutions were successful in drawing students from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds to public universities was sixty (21%) compared to forty-five (16%), 110 (39%), and sixty-four (24%). 175 people, or 63%, agreed with the statement overall. With a mean score of 3.99, their answers showed that they strongly agreed with the statement.

In response to the question of whether the growth of opportunities in private universities closes the gap between different socioeconomic groups' access to high-quality education, 20 (7%) 41 (15%), 82 (29%) and 137 (49%) of the respondents strongly disagreed, disagreed, agreed, and strongly agreed. In total, 219 respondents, or 78%, agreed with the statement. Their responses' average was 3.057, indicating that they agreed with the proposition.

### 4.1.3 Social Inclusion and Diversity

Table 5 shows the respondents responses on social inclusion and diversity

Table 5: Social Inclusion and Diversity

Questionnaire Item	SD	D	A	SA	Mean
1. I feel accepted and valued for my diversity within the university community.	86	95	69	30	2.154
2. I believe that the university promotes an environment that respects and celebrates diversity	99	53	80	48	2.104
3. I feel supported by university policies and initiatives aimed at promoting social inclusion	70	60	80	70	2.536
4. The university provides equal opportunities for individuals from diverse backgrounds.	112	71	60	37	2.079

5. Social events and extracurricular activities organized by the university are inclusive	13	47	62	158	3.304
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Source: Primary Data

Table 5's findings show that 86 (31%), 95 (34%), 69 (25%) and 30 (10%) of the participants, strongly expressed disagreement, disagreement, agreement, and strong agreement with the statement that they felt appreciated and welcomed for their differences within the campus community. Overall, 181 (65 %) of the respondents disagreed while 99 (35 %) agreed that they felt accepted and valued for their diversity within the university community. The responses on this item had a mean of 2.154, which was an indication of a disagreement with the statement.

Regarding the responses on whether they believed that the university promotes an environment that respects and celebrates diversity; 99 (35 %), 53 (19 %), 80 (29 %), 48 (17 %) of the respondents strongly disagreed, disagreed, agreed, and strongly agreed that they believed that the university promotes an environment that respects and celebrates diversity. Overall, 152 (54 %) of the respondents disagreed while 128 (46 %) agreed with the statement. These responses had a mean of 2.104, which indicated disagreement with the statement.

With respect to the question that required them to indicate if they felt supported by university policies and initiatives aimed at promoting social inclusion, their responses were as follows: 70 (25 %), 60 (21 %), 80 (29 %), and 70 (25 %) of the respondents strongly disagreed, disagreed, agreed and strongly agreed that they felt supported by university policies and initiatives aimed at promoting social inclusion. Overall, 150 (54 %) agreed in some way with the statement while 130 (46 %) disagreed. Their responses had a mean of 2.536 which indicate some degree of agreement.

In relation to the question as to whether their university provides equal opportunities for individuals from diverse backgrounds, their responses were as follows: 112 (40 %), 71 (25 %), 60 (21 %), and 37 (14 %) of the respondents strongly disagreed, disagreed, agreed and strongly agreed that their university provides equal opportunities for individuals from diverse backgrounds. Overall, 183 (65 %) disagreed while 97 (35 %) agreed with the statement. Their responses had a mean of 2.079 which indicated a disagreement.

When asked whether the social events and extracurricular activities organized by the university were inclusive, 13 (5 %), 47 (17 %), 62 (22 %), and 158 (56 %) of the respondents strongly disagreed, disagreed, agreed and strongly agreed that the social events and extracurricular activities organized by the university were inclusive. Overall, 220 (78 %) of the respondents agreed with the statement while 60 (22 %) disagreed. The mean of their responses was 3.304 which indicated agreement with the statement.

## 4.2 Correlations

At the alpha level,  $\alpha=.05$ , the null hypothesis, "There is no significant impact of expansion of higher education opportunities in private universities on social inclusion and diversity within public universities in Western Uganda," was tested in order to provide an answer to the research question, "How does the expansion of higher education opportunities in private universities impact social inclusion and diversity

within public universities in western Uganda?" The influence on social inclusion and diversity at public institutions (Mean = 2.477 S. D =.246) and the growth of opportunities in private colleges (Mean = 3.035 S. D =.488) were compared in order to determine the relationship between the null hypothesis. The test's outcomes were displayed in table 9.

Table 6: Pearson Correlation

Variable	Inferential Statistic	Expansion of Opportunities	Impact on social inclusion and Diversity
Expansion of opportunities	Pearson correlation	1	.54
	Sig.(2-tailed)		.03
Impact on social inclusion and diversity	Pearson correlation	.54	1
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.03	
Number of Respondents	N	280	280

Source: Researcher, 2024

The results in table 9 show a positive moderate correlation between expansion of opportunities in private universities and social inclusion and diversity in public universities ( $r(278) = .54, p = .03$ ). According to the interpretation of these data, the alternative was accepted and the null hypothesis was rejected because the p-value of 0.03 is smaller than the alpha-level 0.05.

## 5. Conclusion

Expansion of opportunities in private university has a significant impact on social inclusion and diversity in public Universities in western Uganda.

### 5.1 Recommendations

Government Policy and Funding Allocation:

- i. Funding for public universities should be given top priority, and policies that support diversity and inclusion should be put in place by the government. This can involve giving scholarships, setting aside funds to assist low-income students, and making sure public colleges have the staff and infrastructure needed to serve a diverse student body.
- ii. Prioritize funding for public universities and put in place policies that support social inclusion and diversity.
- iii. Private and public universities should be encouraged to collaborate so as to pool resources and expertise in advancing social inclusion and diversity.
- iv. Public institutions should identify access hurdles and create customized solutions, by actively engaging with their local communities.

- v. Public colleges ought to implement comprehensive admissions procedures that take into account a variety of non-academic aspects

### **Declaration**

We confirm that each one of us has reviewed and given his/her approval to the work. We also verify that every author contributed to this write up in equal measures.

### **Conflict of interest**

We also clarify while writing this paper, no incidences of conflict of interest have been experienced.

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