


RESEARCH ARTICLE

Role of Higher Education Institutions' Capacity Building Programs in Promoting Transnational Education in Uganda: A Case of Makerere University

Muweesi Charles¹  | Nabukalu Aisha² | Yuda Taddeo Kaahwa³ | Lawrence Sserwadda⁴ | Muhamadi Kaweesi¹ | Disan Kuteesa Mugenyi⁵ | Anthony Muwagga Mugagga³

¹Faculty of Science and Education, Busitema University, Tororo, Uganda | ²Faculty of Education, Muteesa I Royal University, Kampala, Uganda | ³School of Education, Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda | ⁴College of Education, Zhejiang Normal University, Jinhua, China | ⁵School of Education, Kyambogo University, Kampala, Uganda

Correspondence: Muweesi Charles (cmuweesi.sci@busitema.ac.ug)

Received: 21 May 2025 | **Revised:** 22 November 2025 | **Accepted:** 9 December 2025

Keywords: host higher education institutions | long-term sustainability | transnational education

ABSTRACT

The study on The Role of Higher Education Institutions' capacity-building programs in Promoting Transnational Education (TNE) in Uganda focuses on both host and home institutions. The research aimed to assess the impact of TNE, investigate challenges affecting its sustainability, and suggest strategies for improvement. A qualitative exploratory design was adopted, wherein data were collected from university administrators, lecturers, and student leaders at Makerere University. Their responses were coded, transcribed, and analysed thematically. Findings revealed that TNE plays a significant role in expanding access to higher education by offering students international learning opportunities, enhancing academic advancement, and providing global exposure, thereby improving education quality. However, challenges such as inadequate funding and regulatory inconsistencies hinder the long-term sustainability of TNE programs. The study concludes that Transnational Education is instrumental and fundamental in transforming the host university's infrastructure and technology, on top of promoting quality education. The study recommends increased government funding for local universities, through grants, subsidies, and policy incentives, to improve their competitiveness in the TNE space. Additionally, the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) should establish clear regulatory frameworks to harmonise TNE policies, ensuring quality education and supporting the sustainability of both host and home institutions in Uganda.

1 | Background to the Study

Higher education in Uganda dates back to the colonial period with the creation of Makerere College in 1922, established as a technical college (Jacob et al. 2009). Makerere University was established in 1949 as a college of the University of London, offering arts, sciences, and medicine, among others. This thus became the first University in East Africa and served as the main Higher Education institution for Ugandans and Students from neighbouring East African countries (Mamdani 2008).

By 1962, when Uganda attained its independence, Makerere University was the only University in the country and played an important role in the education of the region's political and economic leaders (Vavrus and Bartlett 2012). From 1962 onwards, the Government put in the effort to expand access to Higher Education, but the efforts slowed down due to the political instabilities that characterised the country in the 1970s and 1980s, thus resulting in a decline in the quality of education. The post-independence policies on Higher Education focused on building a domestic cadre of educated citizens who could contribute

to national development. However, the 1970s saw a decline in the quality of education due to underfunding and lack of academic freedom, particularly at Makerere University (Vavrus and Bartlett 2012).

From 1986 to 1990, there was a strong desire for educational reforms; however, the reconstruction of the Higher education sector was slow, with resources remaining limited. From the 1990s, the Higher Education System underwent a vital transformation as the government intended to increase access to education. The privatisation of Higher Education became a great development in the 1990s with the establishment of private Universities as a response to the increased demand for tertiary education (Muweesi 2021). The first private University was established in 1997, and this was the University of Uganda Christian. The government also allowed other private institutions to offer degree programs, marking a change towards a more diversified system (Okumbe 1998). Government Universities also expanded during this period with the creation of new institutions like Kyambogo University (2003), Gulu University (2002) and Mbarara University of Science and Technology (1989), according to Nabudere (2007). During this time, the attention was focused on increasing access to Higher Education as a result of increasing population and demand for education. Currently, many Universities have been established to provide Higher Education to both Ugandan Nationals and International students. These include public Universities like Busitema University, Muni University, and Soroti University, among others. However, private Universities are also on the increase, and these include Mutesa I Royal University, Victoria University, and St. Lawrence University, among others (Kasozi 2017).

Between the 2000s and 2010s, as a result of the challenges faced by the government to maintain quality, the Government implemented reforms to address the issue of quality assurance, governance and accountability in Universities, like the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) established in 2002 to oversee and accredit institutions, ensuring quality standards in public and private Universities. Its mandate includes monitoring curriculum development, faculty qualifications, and institutional management (Kasozi 2017). It also began efforts to improve the governance of universities through the introduction of Formal Quality Assurance Mechanisms, audits and accreditation procedures. They were necessary to deal with issues like overcrowding, underfunding and overall challenges of ensuring that educational programs remained relevant and of high quality (Muyanja et al. 2012). With financial constraints, many Universities in Uganda began to explore alternative funding models such as Private-Public partnerships and international collaborations to promote research and development (Kagoda and Ezati 2014). Since 2020, the quality of the Higher Education System has remained a great concern, especially regarding overcrowded lecture rooms, outdated curricula and underfunded institutions (Muyanja et al. 2012). However, public funding for public Universities remains limited, and many institutions rely on student Tuition and donor funding to sustain operations (Kyeyune et al. 2025).

Globally, the sustainability of transnational education depends on adapting to changing educational, regulatory, and cultural contexts. For example, the University of Nottingham

has expanded with branch campuses in Malaysia and China, demonstrating transnational education's global reach (Mazzarol and Soutar 2012). However, challenges like quality assurance, cultural integration, and financial sustainability are key for long-term success (Beine et al. 2014). Transnational education (TNE) involves delivering educational awards in a country other than where the awarding institution is based. Its components include; Flying Faculty where Experts from the awarding institution travel to teach students in another country promoting knowledge sharing and capacity building among local staff, Joint or Dual Awards that involve Collaboration between institutions to offer joint degrees, fostering staff development through joint curriculum planning and delivery, Offshore Programs these are Educational programs offered by an institution in another country, requiring local staff to adapt to new curricula and teaching methods, Cross-Border Education which involves Education provided across national borders, encouraging staff to develop intercultural competencies and innovative teaching approaches, Distance Learning where Students learn remotely through online platforms allowing staff to develop digital literacy and online teaching skills. These components provide opportunities for staff to develop new skills and approaches through international collaborations and training programs (Muweesi and Mayanja Frank 2025).

In Africa, translational education is gaining recognition as a means to improve access to quality higher education, with South Africa and Kenya as leading countries (Mok 2014). However, challenges like funding, regulatory issues, and alignment with national educational goals hinder sustainability and long-term success (Chen and Vanclay 2021). In East Africa, countries like Tanzania and Uganda have embraced transnational education, with universities partnering with foreign institutions in fields like engineering, business and health sciences. The Nelson Mandela African Institute of Science and Technology in Tanzania, for example, collaborates with international universities to strengthen research and training (Monicah 2022). However, disparities in educational quality, academic standard differences, and the need for infrastructure and faculty investment hinder sustainability (Monicah 2022).

In Uganda, Makerere University, the oldest university in the East African region, engages in Translational Education (TNE) through partnerships between universities and international institutions. For example, it collaborates with universities in the UK and the USA to offer globally recognised programs. However, challenges to the sustainability of TNE include limited local capacity, regulatory barriers, and the need for regular curriculum updates to meet global standards (Nsubuga et al. 2023).

Makerere University offers various capacity-building programs to enhance transnational education, focusing on innovative teaching methodologies, research, and community engagement. Some of these programs include: Pedagogy and Professionalism Courses, which aim at training and equipping academic staff with competence-based teaching skills, covering topics like university pedagogy, competence-based curriculum, and emerging technologies. The program aims to promote innovative teaching and learning approaches, Statistics and Data Science Training. The university's Statistics and Data Science Working Group offers training in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine

Learning (ML) to build capacity among its members. Public Investment Management Training. The Public Investment Management Centre at Makerere University provides training programs for public service officials, focusing on planning, executing, and evaluating public investment projects. Youth Leadership Training. The Julius Nyerere Leadership Centre offers leadership training programs for secondary school student leaders, aiming to build leadership competencies and instil core values. Data Analysis Training. The Makerere University Data Science Research Training Program offers online short courses in data analysis using R and Python. Grants Administration and Management. The Grants Administration and Management Support Unit provides support for grant management and administration. Research Training and Mentorship. The university offers research training and mentorship programs, including the Consortium for Advanced Research Training in Africa (CARTA) program, which focuses on researcher training based on global best practices. Capacity Building in Agriculture. The Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM) hosts conferences and training programs to strengthen agricultural education and research in Africa. This study, therefore, seeks to examine the role of higher education institutions 'building programs in promoting transnational education in Uganda, with Makerere University as a case study.

2 | Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to explore the role of higher education institutions 'capacity-building programs in promoting transnational education in Uganda: a case of Makerere University.

3 | Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the impact of Transnational Education on the academic capacity of host higher education institutions in Uganda.
2. To examine the Challenges facing the implementation of Transnational Education Programs in Host Higher Education Institutions in Uganda.
3. To analyse the Strategies to address the challenges facing the implementation of Transnational Education programs in Host Higher Education Institutions in Uganda.

4 | Research Questions

1. What is the impact of transnational education on the academic capacity of the host higher education institutions in Uganda?
2. What are the Challenges facing the implementation of Transnational Education Programs in Host Higher Education Institutions in Uganda?
3. What are the Strategies put in place to address the challenges facing the implementation of Transnational Education programs in Host Higher Education Institutions in Uganda?

5 | Theorisation of the Study

5.1 | Social Capital Theory (Pierre Bourdieu and James Coleman, 1970)

The most effective theory that guided this study was the Social Capital Theory (Pierre Bourdieu and James Coleman, 1970). The theory posits that social relationships, networks, and norms facilitate cooperation, trust, and collective action, generating benefits for individuals and organisations. Originally developed to understand and explain various social phenomena, including Community development, like how communities mobilise resources, build trust, and cooperate to achieve collective goals, the theory has been widely applied to understand how social relationships and networks affect educational outcomes, particularly in terms of human capital development (Nsubuga et al. 2023). In the context of higher education, social capital can enhance collaboration, knowledge sharing, and capacity building. The Theory implies that Makerere University's capacity-building programs can foster social capital among staff, students, and partners, promoting transnational education through Networking and Collaboration that builds relationships with international partners and stakeholders and knowledge sharing through exchanging best practices, research and expertise. Trust and Cooperation foster trust among partners, facilitating joint projects and initiatives. Applying the Social Capital Theory to this research topic provides insights into the importance of relationships. Understanding how relationships between Makerere University and international partners facilitate transnational education. Capacity-building mechanisms through identifying effective capacity-building programs that enhance social capital and identifying the challenges and opportunities arising from social capital dynamics in transnational education. By using the Social Capital Theory, the study can explore how Makerere University's capacity-building programs leverage social capital to promote transnational education.

6 | Literature Review

This section presents a review of the key variables related to the study role of higher education institutions 'building programs in promoting transnational education, the impact of Transnational Education on academic capacity, and the sustainability of the Transnational Education Program in host higher education institutions in Uganda. Each variable is examined in the context of global, regional, and Ugandan educational frameworks with insights from previous studies and scholarly works.

A study on the social impacts of transnational universities in the Netherlands found both positive and negative effects on campus sustainability and local development (Chen and Vanclay 2021). While universities often receive social approval due to their strong reputation, they struggle to manage their social impacts effectively. They neglect corporate social responsibility (CSR) and environmental, social, and governance (ESG) considerations. To enhance social legitimacy, universities should adopt international best practices like transparency, community engagement, and monitoring. These actions would support university social responsibility and meet local expectations (Chen

and Vanclay 2021). Iliev et al. (2025) explored the value of transnational education partnerships in the United Kingdom, emphasising their role in enhancing educational quality, promoting cultural exchange, and offering diverse learning opportunities. The study highlighted benefits such as improved resource access, shared expertise, and the development of globally competent graduates. It stressed the importance of strategic partnerships in fostering internationalisation in higher education. However, the study's findings have a contextual gap as they were conducted in a developed country, where TNE effects may be more pronounced. This highlights the need for tailored policy approaches in developing countries like Uganda, where TNE impacts may differ due to economic factors (Murphy 2005). The research underscores the importance of adapting strategies to local contexts.

A study by Nsubuga et al. 2023, explored the impact of collaborative degree programs between Ugandan universities and international institutions, finding that these partnerships improved curriculum relevance and resource sharing, supporting sustainability. However, it highlighted the gap in understanding the long-term financial consequences, particularly the reliance on foreign funding, and stressed the need for sustainable funding models. Similarly, Charles et al. (2024) noted the need for enhanced research capacity and fostered innovation and thus pointed out the lack of assessment regarding the long-term impact on local academic autonomy and the potential for brain drain. Addressing these issues is crucial for the sustainability of TNE in Uganda. Furthermore, a study analysed the adoption of online learning models in Ugandan universities as a result of transnational education initiatives. The study found that these models increased access to education and improved institutional resilience during crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Kanyesigye et al. 2023). Nonetheless, it pointed out the lack of robust infrastructure and digital literacy among students as significant barriers that need further exploration. Charles et al. (2024) argued that the phenomenon of brain drain can be transformed into brain gain, suggesting that the migration of academics and researchers to better-funded foreign universities does not necessarily lead to a loss for home institutions. Instead, he posits that these professionals can acquire valuable skills and knowledge abroad, which they can later bring back to their home countries, thereby enhancing the capacity and sustainability of their native higher education institutions. This perspective challenges the notion that transnational education inherently undermines the sustainability of higher education institutions in Uganda.

Healey (2018) explores the challenges of managing transnational education (TNE) partnerships from the perspective of home university managers using qualitative methods. The study found that home-campus managers generally view TNE negatively, citing risks, low scalability, sustainability, and profitability. They also report resistance from staff. In contrast, in-country managers feel a lack of empathy from their home peers but align more with local colleagues and stakeholders. A key limitation is that the study focuses on managers from a single country (Nyerere 2019). The findings suggest universities should raise awareness and commitment to TNE among home-campus staff. The challenges of quality assurance in transnational education (TNE) programs in

Kenya indicate that the lack of standardised quality assurance frameworks between home and host institutions often leads to discrepancies in educational delivery (Suntharalingam 2025). Additionally, Kenyan institutions struggle to align their curricula with those of foreign partner universities, which can result in a dilution of academic standards. Furthermore, the study emphasised that the regulatory environment in Kenya is complex, with multiple bodies overseeing higher education, leading to confusion and inconsistency in quality assurance processes. Furthermore, the researchers identified that cultural differences between Kenyan students and their foreign counterparts often create barriers to effective learning. For instance, pedagogical approaches that work in Western contexts may not resonate with Kenyan students, leading to disengagement and poor academic performance. The study also pointed out that the lack of local relevance in some TNE programs makes it difficult for students to see the practical applicability of their education in the Kenyan job market, thus threatening their sustainability (Suntharalingam 2025). Additionally, Teferra (2025) argues that while resources are important, strategic planning, leadership, and institutional policies can compensate for financial and infrastructural limitations in some cases. However, Healey (2018) challenged or provided a different perspective on the weaknesses of institutional collaboration in transnational education and argued that while bureaucratic challenges exist, many transnational education programs have successfully established sustainable partnerships through adaptive strategies, policy reforms, and innovative collaboration models. More still, Bosire and Amimo (2017) examined the financial sustainability of TNE programs and noted that many institutions face significant financial pressures due to fluctuating market demand for specific courses. This uncertainty makes it challenging for institutions to allocate resources effectively, often resulting in underfunded programs that struggle to maintain quality. The study also highlighted that the reliance on international partnerships for funding creates vulnerabilities, particularly in times of economic downturns. Despite the valuable insights provided by the aforementioned studies, they overlooked the impact of the digital divide on access to and the effectiveness of transnational education (TNE) programs (Bosire and Amimo 2017). Furthermore, these studies did not adequately address the critical role of stakeholder engagement and collaboration among the various parties involved in TNE. This lack of emphasis on inclusive partnerships hinders the potential for TNE programs to adapt effectively to local contexts and needs. Thus, addressing these gaps is essential for fostering a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges facing TNE in Uganda (Murphy 2005).

Adeyemo (2025) highlight the regulatory challenges in Nigeria's transnational education (TNE) programs, emphasising the need for a cohesive framework and better accreditation processes to facilitate foreign partnerships. They recommend creating a dedicated regulatory body to ensure compliance with global standards. Bosire and Amimo (2017) discuss how frequent policy changes and bureaucracy hinder TNE growth, suggesting streamlined regulations to improve international collaborations. Adamu et al. (2025) point out the infrastructural deficiencies in TNE programs, particularly in library and laboratory facilities. They advocate for greater

TABLE 1 | Indicating the study respondents.

Category	Gender	Target population	Sample size	Percentage	Sampling technique.
University administrators	Male	6	4	67%	Purposive sampling
	Female	4	3	75%	Purposive sampling
University lecturers	Male	5	3	60%	Purposive sampling
	Female	3	1	33%	Purposive sampling
University student leaders	Male	7	4	57%	Purposive sampling
	Female	5	3	60%	Purposive sampling
Total		30	18	60%	

Note: Source: Primary data (N=30).

investment in academic infrastructure to improve learning outcomes and attract more international partnerships. Harris (2020) identify regulatory and financial challenges in TNE programs in Nigeria and South Africa, noting that South Africa's stronger policies and infrastructure support growth. Rwabuhinga et al. (2024) find that TNE graduates in Uganda have higher employability rates but face gaps in practical training and industry connections. They recommend stronger institutional partnerships with the labour market. Bosire and Amimo (2017) examined student mobility, suggesting that expanding TNE programs in Nigeria could reduce outbound mobility and attract international students. He emphasised the role of cultural challenges in TNE programs in Nigeria, noting that differences between foreign and local educational cultures affect student engagement. They recommend cultural orientation programs to bridge these gaps and improve student satisfaction. The study also emphasises the need for faculty training in culturally responsive teaching methods. Harris (2020) explores student perceptions of TNE program quality, finding that foreign-affiliated programs are often viewed as superior. This is attributed to their teaching methods and well-structured curricula. Adick (2018) examine financial constraints in Nigeria's TNE programs, emphasising their reliance on fluctuating international student tuition. They propose strategic partnerships with foreign universities for joint funding, shared resources, and research collaborations to ensure financial stability. Bosire and Amimo (2017) highlight the role of digital learning platforms in addressing logistical challenges. Their study finds that hybrid and online learning models improve access to quality education.

7 | Research Design

The study adopted an explanatory qualitative research study design. This design was thought appropriate because the study of the rate of higher institutions or education capacity in promoting Transnational education requires an in-depth and flexible investigation. According to Creswell 2013, qualitative approaches are very appropriate to study or navigate such complex social phenomena, most especially those that run across many social, economic or political spaces, such as transnational education. The gathered results were transcribed and analysed thematically.

8 | Study Population, Sample and Location

The study was carried out in Uganda. Uganda was chosen for study because it is a hub for multiple refugee communities. It has the largest number of refugees in the region. According to the Uganda Bureau of Statistics, there are approximately 1.9 million refugees and asylum seekers as of 2025, the largest in Africa. These come from Congo, Sudan, Rwanda, Burundi, Somalia, Eritrea, among others. The study population comprised all the stakeholders involved in Higher Education, most especially those directly involved in programs that are skewed at promoting transnational education or internationalisation or programs which target non-citizens in Uganda. The specific study sample included, University administrators such as the Academic registrar, the members of Top management such as the Vice chancellor and his deputies, University Academic and non-academic staff such as the Dean of students, staff-involved in the Universities international office and members of faculty at different levels the sample also included university students leaders especially the international students and those students dealing with non-Ugandan citizens students. A purposive sampling technique was employed, meaning participants were selected based on their expertise and direct involvement in transnational education. From Table 1 below, the study population consisted of a balanced gender, and the study population's categories were balanced. This method ensured that the data collected was relevant, detailed, and reflective of the actual experiences of the stakeholders involved in transnational education at Makerere University.

9 | Interviews

The interviews were guided by open-ended questions designed to align with the study's topic and research objectives, this approach allowed for a comprehensive discovery of beliefs, feelings, behaviour and facts providing detailed information on the role of higher education institutions' capacity building programs in promoting the transnational education, Challenges facing the implementation of Transnational Education Programs in Host Higher Education Institutions and Strategies to address the challenges facing the implementation of Transnational Education programs in Host Higher Education Institutions. Each section critically analyses the

study's references from scholars, real-world examples, and educational statistics.

10 | Transnational Education on the Academic Capacity of Host Higher Education Institutions

Through potential insight from one of the male University administrators at Makerere University, it was revealed that Transnational Education programs have enhanced the academic capacity of the institution by providing access to new knowledge, technologies and expertise. This has improved research capabilities, curriculum development and teaching quality. Transnational education has further significantly increased access to higher learning opportunities for students across Uganda.

Transnational Education programs have been a pivotal point for us at Makerere University. The programs have brought in new knowledge, technologies, and expertise that have significantly enhanced our academic capacity. We have seen improvements in research capabilities, curriculum development, and teaching quality. Moreover, these programs have opened up higher learning opportunities for students from all over Uganda, which is a huge step forward for our country, and this has resulted in the production of highly qualified graduates who meet both local and international standards.

(Male University administrator 1, March 2025)

This captures the essence of the interview findings, highlighting the positive impact of Transnational Education programs on Makerere University's academic capacity and access to higher learning opportunities, notably the production of highly qualified graduates who meet the global standards. Transnational Education programs have significantly enhanced Makerere University's academic capacity. Knowledge transfer programs have brought in new knowledge, technologies, and expertise in addition to improvements in research capabilities.

Responses from the University show that the Transnational Education programs promote quality enhancement in host institutions by introducing international standards, quality assurance mechanisms and accreditation processes. They have provided host institutions with improved resources, academic networks, and international recognition, thus promoting quality, as lamented by one of the female University administrators below;

Transnational Education programs have been so instrumental in enhancing quality in our institution. By introducing international standards, quality assurance mechanisms, and accreditation processes, we have been able to elevate our academic offerings and ensure they meet global benchmarks. These programs have also brought in valuable resources, expanded our academic networks, and given us

international recognition, which has been a huge boost for our reputation and credibility.

(Female University Administrator 1, March 2025)

This highlights the administrator's perspective on the benefits of Transnational Education programs in promoting quality enhancement, resource improvement, and international recognition. These aspects are crucial in the implementation of Transnational Education Programs. The institution is now more competitive globally due to its enhanced quality and international recognition. And through the programs, Makerere University has elevated academic offerings that meet global benchmarks.

Findings from Makerere University reveal that Transnational Education Programs (TNE) partnerships can facilitate collaboration between institutions, enabling them to share resources, expertise and best practices. This can lead to joint projects, staff exchange programs and joint degree offerings, just as one University Lecturer states below:

Through our Transnational Education partnership, we have been able to collaborate with international institutions, sharing resources, expertise, and best practices. This collaboration has opened up opportunities for joint projects, staff exchange programs, and joint degree offerings, which have enriched our academic environment and provided our students with a more global perspective on top of producing a highly qualified labour force that competes in the global labour market.

(Male University lecturer 2, March 2025)

This quotation highlights the benefits of TNE partnerships in facilitating collaboration, resource sharing, and joint academic initiatives, ultimately enhancing the academic experience for students. Thus, promoting joint projects and staff exchange. The partnership has enriched the academic environment through joint projects, staff exchange programs, and joint degree offerings, as well as providing students with a more global perspective.

11 | Challenges Facing the Implementation of Transnational Education Programs in Host Higher Education Institutions

Through interaction with another male lecturer at Makerere University about the challenges facing the transnational education programs in host and home higher education institutions in Uganda. It was explained that institutions struggle to secure stable financial support, which restricts investment in learning materials and faculty training. This limitation, in turn, compromises the overall academic experience, making it difficult to sustain quality education as indicated in Table 2, response 1 above. This captures the lecturer's perspective on the financial challenges facing transnational education programs, highlighting the impact on resource investment and quality education. He emphasises that resource constraints affect the effective

TABLE 2 | Transcript analysis of the implementation of transnational education programs (TEPs) in host higher education institutions.

S/N	Theme	Response
1	Challenges facing the transnational education programs in host and home higher education institutions in Uganda	One of the biggest challenges we face with transnational education programs is securing stable financial support. Without sufficient funding, it's hard to invest in the resources we need, like updated learning materials and faculty training. This not only affects the quality of education we provide but also makes it difficult to sustain the programs in the long run. This creates a lot of loopholes in the implementation of the Transnational Education programs (Male University lecturer 3, March 2025)
2	Adequacy of facilities and infrastructure	Resource constraints are a significant challenge for us at Makerere University. Our institution often lacks the necessary facilities and infrastructure, such as modern libraries, well-equipped laboratories, and sufficient classrooms. This shortage of resources directly affects the quality of education we can provide, making it difficult for both students and faculty to access what they need for effective teaching and learning. I do believe this challenge cuts across almost all Universities that implement TNE programs, especially in the African continent. (Female University administrator 2, March 2025)
3	Fluctuating Student Enrolment	Student enrollment can be quite unpredictable, and it's often affected by economic conditions and policy changes. Many of our students, especially those from low-income families, struggle to afford tuition fees, which leads to fluctuating class sizes. This inconsistency not only affects our financial stability but also makes it challenging to sustain our programs in the long term. This may in turn force some Universities to suspend such a wonderful program (Female University lecturer 2, March 2025)

Note: Source: Primary data.

implementation of the program, and therefore, securing stable financial support is a significant challenge for transnational education programs. Since it limits investment in essential resources, such as updated learning materials and faculty training.

Likewise, during an interaction with one of the University's female administrators at Makerere University, it was emphasised that resource constraints faced by host institutions are a major challenge. She further noted that many institutions lack adequate facilities and infrastructure, including libraries, laboratories, and classrooms, as hinted at in Table 2, Response 2. This inadequacy negatively impacts the delivery of quality education, as students and faculty members struggle to access the necessary academic resources to facilitate effective teaching and learning. This means that the administrator's concerns about resource constraints emphasise the impact on infrastructure and the quality of education. He emphasises that limited infrastructure in the long run may make the TNE programs unsuccessful and thus suspend their existence in the institution. Resource constraints directly affect the quality of education provided and are believed to be widespread among universities implementing Transnational Education (TNE) programs in Africa.

While interacting with a female lecturer, she raised concerns about fluctuating student enrollment, noting that economic conditions and policy changes significantly influence student numbers. The response resonates that many students find it difficult to afford tuition fees, leading to inconsistent class sizes, which, in turn, affects the financial stability and sustainability of the programs, as noted in response 3 in Table 2. This implies that the lecturer's concerns about the effects of economic conditions and policy changes on student enrollment highlight the challenges of maintaining financial stability and program sustainability. Student enrollment is affected by economic conditions and policy changes, particularly from low-income families that struggle to afford tuition fees.

12 | Strategies to Address the Challenges Facing the Implementation of Transnational Education Programs in Host Higher Education Institutions

Through interaction with one of the male administrators at Makerere University, he emphasised the need to diversify funding sources, including government support, private partnerships,

and international grants, which can help stabilise financial resources for transnational programs, ensuring continuous investment in learning and faculty development.

As a recognised University, to ensure the sustainability of our transnational education programs, we need to diversify our funding sources. This includes seeking government support, forming private partnerships, and applying for international grants. By doing so, we can stabilise our financial resources and continue investing in what matters most—our learning materials and faculty development and we have taken a drastic step towards achieving the objective.

(Male University administrator 3, March 2025)

This captures the administrator's perspective on the importance of diversifying funding sources to support transnational programs, emphasising the need for financial stability and investment in key areas for the success of transnational education programs in the university. Much attention is to continue investing in what matters most rather than the random apportionment of resources.

Another female administrator recognised the need by host institutions, including Makerere University, to prioritise infrastructure development, investing in modern classrooms and libraries, as well as strengthening ICT facilities for better learning experiences, which will improve the quality of education delivered.

For us to deliver high-quality education, we need to prioritise infrastructure development. This means investing in modern classrooms, libraries, and robust ICT facilities. By doing so, we'll create a better learning environment that supports the academic success of our students and enhances the overall quality of education we provide, and with this, we have done our best as far as infrastructure development and investment in ICT facilities.

(Female University administrator 3, March 2025)

This quotation captures the administrator's emphasis on the importance of infrastructure development in improving the quality of education, highlighting the need for modern facilities and technology in an attempt to make the implementation of transnational education easier. Establishing well-stocked computer laboratories with free internet access can promote research and connectivity among students and staff of different universities.

Another male administrator at Makerere University emphasised the need to create a unified framework for cross-border regulations, working with international bodies to harmonise curricula and certification, so that academic programs are aligned and recognised across borders, minimising administrative delays and enhancing program sustainability.

We need a unified framework for cross-border regulations that allows for seamless collaboration

and recognition of academic programs. By working with international bodies to harmonise curricula and certification, we can ensure that our programs are aligned and recognised globally, reducing administrative delays and enhancing sustainability as a university. We have put much effort into promoting collaboration with other international universities to promote and maintain TNE programs.

(Male University administrator student 4, March 2025)

This quotation highlights the administrator's perspective on the importance of a unified framework for cross-border regulations, emphasising the benefits of harmonisation and global recognition for program sustainability. Emphasis must be put on collaboration with international Universities so as to encourage and sustain Transnational Education programs at Makerere University.

13 | Discussion

Global partnerships have enhanced resources, academic networks, and international recognition for host institutions, aligning with (Suntharalingam 2025), on the benefits of shared expertise and global competence. These partnerships promote internationalisation in higher education. Bosire and Amimo (2017) recommend strategic partnerships for joint funding and research collaborations to ensure financial stability. In support of the above qualitative response, a study by Harris (2020) on the impact of collaborative degree programs between Ugandan universities and international institutions indicated that partnerships enhanced curriculum relevance and resource sharing, contributing to the sustainability of local institutions. Students benefit greatly from exposure to international education models, gaining access to diverse perspectives and global best practices. These findings agree with Harris (2020), who emphasises the importance of skills development, noting that transnational education equips local populations with essential competencies needed in a globalised workforce. Chen and Vanclay (2021) underscore both the benefits and challenges associated with program and provider mobility, suggesting a nuanced approach to policy-making in the education sector to maximise positive outcomes while addressing potential drawbacks.

Collaborations between local and foreign institutions have enhanced knowledge transfer, improving teaching methodologies and academic discourse. However, the dominance of foreign accreditation systems places Ugandan universities at a disadvantage, as they must conform to external requirements that may not align with local needs. In agreement with these respondents, Healey (2018) indicated that partnerships enhanced curriculum relevance and resource sharing, contributing to the sustainability of local institutions. Sustaining universities in Uganda is becoming harder due to transnational education. Many top lecturers leave for better-funded foreign universities, causing a brain drain. Local institutions also struggle with financial instability due to dependence on external funding. Without a plan to balance global opportunities and local development, sustainability is at risk, Teferra (2025). However, Charles et al. (2024) disagree with

the findings, stating that brain drain can become brain gain if returning academics bring back valuable skills to strengthen local institutions.

Host institutions face financial instability, limiting investment in learning materials and faculty training, and affecting academic quality (Iliev et al. 2025). Bosire and Amimo (2017) similarly noted that fluctuating market demand puts pressure on institutions, making resource allocation difficult. This uncertainty leads to underfunded programs struggling to maintain quality. However, Teferra (2025) argues that strategic planning and strong leadership can compensate for these limitations. In agreement with the findings, Adamu et al. (2025) and Rwabuhinga et al. (2024) call for increased investment in infrastructure to improve learning outcomes and attract more students to transnational education programs. There is weak institutional collaboration due to bureaucratic challenges. However, Iliev et al. (2025) argued that adaptive strategies and policy reforms can lead to successful partnerships. Healey (2018) suggested expanding TNE to reduce outbound mobility, while Kanyesigye et al. (2023) proposed policy incentives for foreign institutions.

There is a need to diversify funding sources through government support, private partnerships, and international grants to stabilise finances for transnational programs. This aligns with Suntharalingam (2025), who advocates for strategic partnerships to enhance financial stability. Kanyesigye et al. (2023) also found that such models increased education access and improved institutional resilience, especially during crises like COVID-19. There is also a need to create a unified framework for cross-border regulations, working with international bodies to harmonise curricula and certification, so that academic programs are aligned and recognised across borders, minimising administrative delays and enhancing program sustainability. The findings also concur with Adeyemo (2025), whose study emphasised the need for a cohesive regulatory framework that aligns with international standards. In agreement with the above findings, Suntharalingam (2025) noted challenges of quality assurance in transnational education (TNE) programs in Kenya, indicating that the lack of standardised quality assurance frameworks between home and host institutions often leads to discrepancies in educational delivery.

Strengthening institutional partnerships through joint ventures and research collaborations fosters sustainability and long-term cooperation, despite bureaucratic challenges. However, power imbalances, conflicting goals, and legitimacy issues can hinder these collaborations, as noted by Adick (2018), who highlights that more powerful partners often dominate. They argue that clear agreements and equitable power dynamics are essential for sustainability. Healey (2018) further stress that digital learning platforms can help address logistical challenges impacting the long-term sustainability of TNE programs.

Furthermore, in harmony with Adick (2018), transnational research collaborations enhance the research capacity of Ugandan institutions. The study concluded that these collaborations fostered innovation and knowledge transfer, crucial for sustainability. In disagreement with Healey (2018), who explored the challenges of managing transnational education (TNE) partnerships from the perspective of home university managers,

the results found that home-campus managers generally view TNE negatively, citing risks, low scalability, sustainability and profitability. In support of the findings, Brown (2025) argues that proper funding, rather than mergers or partnerships, is the primary solution to the crisis in English universities. Iliev et al. (2025) suggest that relying solely on partnerships without addressing underlying funding issues may not lead to sustainable outcomes.

14 | Conclusion

The study reveals that transnational education (TNE) in Uganda expands access to higher education by offering international learning opportunities, but local institutions struggle with competition from foreign universities, which impacts enrollment and financial sustainability. Global partnerships in transnational education enhance academic networks and resources but raise concerns about the erosion of indigenous knowledge, local autonomy, and research relevance, as reliance on foreign curricula may undermine national development priorities. Collaborations between local and foreign institutions have enhanced knowledge transfer, improving teaching methodologies and academic discourse. However, the dominance of foreign accreditation systems places Ugandan universities at a disadvantage, as they must conform to external requirements that may not align with local needs. In agreement with these respondents, Muweesi (2021) indicated that partnerships enhanced curriculum relevance and resource sharing, contributing to the sustainability of local institutions.

Transnational education sustainability in Uganda faces challenges like financial constraints, inadequate infrastructure, and misaligned education regulations, alongside fluctuating enrollment and technological deficiencies, requiring comprehensive strategies for improvement. Staffing shortages in home institutions worsen the issue by limiting mentorship and research development, further weakening the local education sector's ability to sustain TNE programs effectively. To overcome these challenges, Uganda needs well-planned actions that ensure both local and international institutions benefit equally. Key steps include improving institutional capacity, securing sustainable funding, strengthening regulations, and enhancing technology. Policies should also encourage the inclusion of local knowledge in international programs, protecting academic independence. There is weak institutional collaboration due to bureaucratic challenges. However, Nyerere (2019), argued that adaptive strategies and policy reforms can lead to successful partnerships. He also suggested expanding TNE to reduce outbound mobility, while Kanyesigye et al. (2023) proposed policy incentives for foreign institutions. Murphy (2005) found that home university managers view TNE negatively due to concerns about sustainability and profitability.

Strengthening institutional partnerships through joint ventures and research collaborations fosters sustainability and long-term cooperation, despite bureaucratic challenges. However, power imbalances, conflicting goals, and legitimacy issues can hinder these collaborations, as noted by Adick (2018), who highlights that more powerful partners often dominate. They argue that clear agreements and equitable power dynamics are essential for

sustainability. Nyerere (2019). Further stress that digital learning platforms can help address logistical challenges impacting the long-term sustainability of TNE programs.

15 | Recommendations

The Ministry of Education and Sports should increase funding for local universities to improve their competitiveness in the transnational education space. Financial support through grants, subsidies, and policy incentives can help sustain home institutions while ensuring quality education for students. The National Council for Higher Education should strengthen research capabilities by promoting indigenous knowledge and contextualised academic studies. Investment in faculty development programs and incentives to retain skilled lecturers should be prioritised to mitigate brain drain. University Management and Administrators should enhance their infrastructure by investing in modern classrooms, libraries, laboratories, and digital learning platforms. Institutions must bridge the technology gap by improving internet access, providing ICT tools, and expanding online learning capabilities to reach a broader student population. University Administrators should strengthen collaboration between local and international institutions through joint research projects, knowledge exchange programs, and shared academic resources. Establishing long-term agreements with foreign institutions can help sustain transnational education programs while maintaining institutional autonomy. There is a need for student support mechanisms to address fluctuating enrollment. Universities should introduce flexible tuition payment plans, scholarships, and affordable learning options. These measures will enhance student access to TNE programs, ensuring stable enrollment and financial sustainability. University administrators should strengthen institutional partnerships through joint ventures and research collaborations, which in turn foster sustainability and long-term cooperation among various universities globally.

Author Contributions

Muweesi Charles: conceptualization, investigation, funding acquisition, writing – original draft, methodology, validation, writing – review and editing, software, formal analysis, resources, project administration.

Acknowledgements

The authors acknowledge all the study participants for participating in the study. We also acknowledge Uganda Education Special Research Interest Group for the Mentorship and Guidance.

Funding

The authors did not receive any specific funding for this study.

Disclosure

The authors have nothing to report.

Ethics Statement

Ethical review and approval were obtained from Faculty of Science and Education Research and Ethics Committee of Busitema University that approved and permitted this study to take Place.

Consent

Informed written and verbal consent was sought from all research participants before the commencement of the fieldwork. Respondents were requested to sign a written informed agreement form. Oral consent was sought from those who felt uncomfortable with either the thumb printing or signing. They were assured of strict confidentiality and anonymity of the responses they provided. No respondent was strong-armed and thus, participation was entirely voluntary.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

References

- Adamu, Y. S., B. Hassan, M. I. Muhammad, and I. Ali. 2025. "Effects of Problem-Based Learning on the Students' Retention of Pre-Service Technology Teachers in Foundry in North-West Nigeria." *Kashere Journal of Education* 8, no. 1: 37–45.
- Adeyemo, A. O. 2025. "Challenges Confronting Education for Self-Reliance Among Tertiary Education Students in Oyo State." *Int'l Journal of Education, Management Sciences and Professional Studies* 1, no. 2: 299–313.
- Adick, C. 2018. "Transnational Education in Schools, Universities, and Beyond: Definitions and Research Areas." *Transnational Social Review* 8, no. 2: 124–138.
- Beine, M., R. Noël, and L. Ragot. 2014. "Determinants of the International Mobility of Students." *Economics of Education Review* 41: 40–54.
- Bosire, J., and C. Amimo. 2017. "Emerging Issues and Prospects in the Management of Transnational Education." *International Journal of Higher Education* 6, no. 5: 143–154.
- Brown, R. R. 2025. *Lessons From The Arena: Fragments of My Journey Through Leadership, Conflict, and Culture in Higher Education* (Doctoral dissertation, Miami University).
- Charles, M., N. Sarah, and M. M. Anthony. 2024. "Education as a Necessity of Life: An Exploration of Ugandan Education System Quality With Reference to John Dewey's Philosophical Correlates." *Review of Education* 12, no. 1: e3466.
- Chen, C., and F. Vanclay. 2021. "Transnational Universities, Host Communities and Residents: Social Impacts, University Social Responsibility and Campus Sustainability." *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education* 22, no. 8: 88–107.
- Harris, R. O. 2020. "Transnational Education in Sub-Saharan Africa: Strategic Partnerships." *Journal of Higher Education Theory and Practice* 20, no. 2: 111–121.
- Healey, N. M. 2018. "The Challenges of Managing Transnational Education Partnerships: The Views of "Home-Based" Managers vs "In-Country" Managers." *International Journal of Educational Management* 32, no. 2: 241–256.
- Iliev, D., D. Ilieva, and Z. Zhelev. 2025. "Teaching Methods Through the Eyes of Bulgarian Students From Three Generations." *Tuning Journal for Higher Education* 12, no. 1: 97–124.
- Jacob, W. J., Y. K. Nsubuga, and C. B. Mugimu. 2009. "Higher Education in Uganda: The Role of Community Colleges in Educational Delivery and Reform." In *Community College Models*, 335–358. Springer Netherlands.
- Kagoda, A. M., and B. A. Ezati. 2014. "Secondary School Teachers' Perception of "Teacher Professional Development": A Case Study of

- Teachers From Five Districts of Uganda.” *Journal of Teacher Education and Educators* 3, no. 2: 185–202.
- Kanyesigye, S. T., J. Uwamahoro, and I. Kemeza. 2023. “Effect of Problem-Based Learning on Ugandan Secondary School Physics Classroom Practices: An Observational Study.” *F1000Research* 12: 245.
- Kasozi, A. B. K. 2017. *The National Council for Higher Education and the Growth of the University Sub-Sector in Uganda, 2002–2012*. CODESRIA.
- Kyeyune, R., B. Engotoit, E. A. Katarahweire, A. Kasule, and M. G. Kituyi. 2025. “Technological Readiness and Integration of Digital Technologies for Teaching in Government-Aided Primary Schools in Uganda.” *Forum for Education Studies* 3, no. 3: 2918.
- Mamdani, M. 2008. “Higher Education, the State and the Marketplace.” *Journal of Higher Education in Africa/Revue de L’enseignement supérieur en Afrique* 6, no. 1: 1–10.
- Mazzarol, T., and G. N. Soutar. 2012. “Revisiting the Global Market for Higher Education.” *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics* 24, no. 5: 717–737.
- Mok, H. N. 2014. “Teaching Tip: The Flipped Classroom.” *Journal of Information Systems Education* 25, no. 1: 7.
- Monicah, K. R. 2022. “Preparedness of Institutions of Higher Learning for Emergency Education in the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Case of Uganda.” *Education journal* 11: 231–234.
- Murphy, L. M. 2005. *Transnational Advocacy in Education, Changing Roles for NGOs: Examining the Construction of a Global Campaign and its Effects on “Education for all” in Uganda*. Stanford University.
- Muweesi, C. 2021. Management of higher education students’ loan scheme funds in Uganda (Doctoral dissertation, Busitema University; Zhejiang Normal University).
- Muweesi, C., and M. Mayanja Frank. 2025. “Impact of Regulatory Frameworks on the Quality of Distance Education in Uganda’s Higher Education: A Case of Uganda Martyrs University-Nkozi (UMU).” *Cogent Education* 12, no. 1: 2575547.
- Muyanja, A., P. I. Musasizi, L. E. Tibatemwa, and E. F. Muwanga. 2012. *Development and Piloting of Online Student Evaluation of Teaching at Makerere University*. In 2012, the IEEE International Conference on Technology Enhanced Education (ICTEE) (pp. 1–5). IEEE.
- Nabudere, D. W. 2007. “The Developmental State in Africa.” *Southern African Review of Education With Production* 13, no. 2: 125–138.
- Nsubuga, H., D. S. Osborn, and Q. Brookens. 2023. “Meeting Ugandan University Students’ Career Needs Using the Cognitive Information Processing Model.” *Career Development Quarterly* 71, no. 3: 238–250.
- Nyerere, J. 2019. “Construction and Governance of Transnational Higher Education Research Partnerships in Kenya and Uganda.” *Papers in Education and Development* 37, no. 2: 133–157.
- Okumbe, J. A. O. 1998. *Educational Management: Theory and Practice*. African Books Collective Ltd.
- Rwabuhinga, R., C. Ibore, C. Muweesi, et al. 2024. “Tracing the Employability Competencies Among BSE Graduates in Mid-Western Uganda.” *East African Journal of Education Studies* 7, no. 4: 103–116. <https://doi.org/10.37284/eajes.7.4.2238>.
- Suntharalingam, P. 2025. “Challenges and Opportunities of Transnational Education Programs: Case Studies and Lessons Learned.” In *Contemporary Approaches to Internationalisation in Higher Education*, 197–232. IGI Global Scientific Publishers.
- Teferra, D. 2025. “Research and Academic Collaborations in Africa: Imperatives, Potentials, and Risks.” In *Research and Innovation in African Higher Education: Trends, Challenges and Prospects*, 183–211. Springer Nature Switzerland.
- Vavrus, F., and L. Bartlett. 2012. “Comparative Pedagogies and Epistemological Diversity: Social and Materials Contexts of Teaching in Tanzania.” *Comparative Education Review* 56, no. 4: 634–658.