

Original Research Article

An Investigation of Enterprise Resource Planning capabilities Influencing Performance of Uganda Universities: An Empirical Review

Peacekind Kyosaba^{1*}, Dr. Josphat Kyalo²¹Ph.D. Candidate (MIS), Kenyatta University, Kenya²Lecturer, Kenyatta University, Kenya**Article History****Received:** 16.06.2022**Accepted:** 04.07.2022**Published:** 12.07.2022**Journal homepage:**<https://www.easpublisher.com>**Quick Response Code**

Abstract: Public universities play an important role in economic development in Uganda. As the number of public universities increase, their performance becomes key competitive factor. Enterprise Resource Planning Systems (ERPs) is seen as a solution for improved performance. The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of Enterprise Resource Planning System capabilities on performance of Uganda universities. Universities in Uganda have been performing poorly because of inadequate infrastructure, poor service delivery, lack of management support and unwarranted information insecurity. The objective of this study was to establish the role of information security, examine the influence of management support, evaluate the effect of information system infrastructure and to determine the relevance of service delivery on performance of universities in Uganda. The study was guided by the contingency theory and the Actor Network Theory. This paper discusses secondary data evidence that prevail on the role of Enterprise Resource Planning System integration in Public Universities in Uganda. A number of journal articles were reviewed. The study found out that management support, information security, service delivery, information system infrastructure has a positive effect on performance of universities. Results depicted that Enterprise Resource Planning System had strong effect on performance of organizations including public universities, though less studied in the Uganda context. Conclusively, the role of Enterprise Resource Planning System on performance of Public Universities in Uganda requires field-based empirical evidence by recent research attention. This could also be utilized to develop a model for assessing performance of organizations by Enterprise Resource Planning System.

Keywords: Economic development, enterprise resource planning System, public universities, Uganda, university performance and organizational performance.

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INTRODUCTION

Public Universities are key entities in any economy that their performance is a central measure of excellence in any country's human resource capacity building. To realize desired performance, universities have adapted Enterprise Resource Planning Integration (Soliman & Karia, 2021). Enterprise Resource Planning System (ERP) provides appropriate record and data sharing support, and it's integration is quite useful for various functions. In universities, management of students, staff and overall performance can be shared well via Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) System. Effective university performance is commensurate with increase in admissions, grades, degrees awarded and research as leading performance yardsticks (Schlichter, Klyer & Haug, 2020) defined university performance whether public or private as an outcome measure of their described services.

Globally, public universities have improved efforts to attain effectiveness and competitiveness (Ahmer, 2017; Kireeva, Slepenskova & Shipunova, 2018) to meet the changing institutional needs and catch up with the global educational changes. Evidence shows that these universities' performance has improved where Information and Communication Technology (ICT) practices are being utilized (Ahmer, 2017; Soliman & Karia, 2021). In Developed countries Enterprise Resource Planning is an integral part of university education systems, a good performance has been noted. Related efforts have been undertaken in Africa to integrate Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) System for better performance, though with significant variations in the scope and adaptation levels. (Ahmer, 2017; Osebe, 2016). Mwangi and Waithaka (2018) for instance showed profound effects of Enterprise Resource Planning in facilitating the quality of work and job performance benefits. In 2018, Kipyegon also

revealed that it is an effective tool in enhancing organizational performance. These scholars show Enterprise Resource Planning integration as not a wastage of resources when integrated in university education systems. In public universities, Enterprise Resource Planning System (ERP) continues to evolve and its adaptation is unavoidable. While this is the case, limited scholarly works have focused on Enterprise Resource Planning integration in universities compared to Small-scale and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). Similarly, there is research paucity in regard to Enterprise Resource Planning integration and its effect on public university performance in Africa compared to western economies. Specific developments of Enterprise Resource Planning integration have been acknowledged in Egypt, South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria and Uganda. Where it has been adapted in Uganda, Enterprise Resource Planning is an imminent digital transformation providing solutions to technological problems and competitiveness.

Empirical evidence reveals that Enterprise Resource Planning has not been widely studied in public as it is for private universities in Uganda. (Kipyegon, 2018; Kasule & Bisaso, 2019; Moya, Musumba & Akodo, 2011; Mayoka and Kyeyune, 2016). Greater scopes of Enterprise Resource Planning integration studies cover Small-Scale and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and the few relating to public universities cover other functional areas. This necessitates a study to explore this subject further. The value of Enterprise Resource Planning in shaping supply chains, human resources, finance, operations, teaching and learning activities in universities could not be overlooked especially in public universities which use citizen's resources. And this calls for a study to investigate Enterprise Resource Planning capabilities influencing performance of Uganda Universities.

Performance of Public Universities

Organizational performance is an important goal for public universities just like it is for any other organization. Public universities performance is a concept as old as university education itself (Beerkens, 2022). University performance is measured across areas of teaching, research, knowledge transfer and international outlook (Times Higher Education, THE, 2022). Relatedly, while focusing on Egypt, Soliman and Karia (2021) considered university performance as the overall achievements realized by the university out of its activities curricula or extra-cultural. Complementary is Bogt and Scapens (2012) who based on parameters like number of students, students' fees, research and academic global ranking to describe University Performance. Later, Ismail and Al-Thaoiehie (2015) considered University Performance as overall outcomes of the university activities expressed in financial, academic and co-curricular standings.. Generally, all these studies (Bogt & Scapens, 2012; Ismail & Al-Thaoiehie, 2015; and Soliman & Karia,

2021) conclude that Performance of Universities whether public or private is based on their set activities and how they are realized.

Specifically, performance of Public University is gauged on the quality of service delivery which is expected to be commensurate to allotted public resources. As a result Public University Performance is a measure of outcomes from the activities that define students' grades, research and knowledge transfer (Etengu, Namwano & Galiwango, 2014). For Public University, more parameters, accountability, transparency and quality of service delivery are often considered (Faranak, Thani & Mehdi, 2017).

Statement of the Problem

University Education is at the pinnacle of any education system in a country, and its performance scope cannot be underscored. Like in any other organization, effective Public University Performance is emphasized. Universities have put an effort to attain desired performance in Uganda (Kasule & Bisaso, 2019). Such efforts have included prioritizing Enterprise Resource Planning integration. This has been premised on view that Enterprise Resource Planning integration enhances efficiency in deploying resources, service delivery and performance, as it is being experienced in other countries (Anyoli & Okoth, 2021; Musisi, 2021). However, universities in Uganda have been performing poorly because of inadequate infrastructure, poor service delivery, lack of or minimal management support and information insecurity (Angoli & Okoth, 2021). To improve their performances, universities have adapted Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) (Musisi, 2021). A number of studies have been done on Enterprise Resource Planning integration in higher institutions of learning mostly outside Uganda (Ahmer, 2017; Soliman and Karia, 2021). Ugandan studies on Enterprise Resource Planning have dominantly focused on Small-scale and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), than universities (Okumu & Buyinza, 2019). Few that focus on university education in Uganda, explore other functions like human resource management, not necessarily organizational performance (Kasule & Bisaso, 2019). Consequently, the scope regarding Enterprise Resource Planning integration and its effect on public universities' performance in Uganda has attracted less attention. This empirical study investigated the nature of performance of universities in that there is poor service delivery, inadequate infrastructure, lack of management support and unwarranted information insecurity.

OBJECTIVES

Main Objective

To examine the influence of Enterprise Resource Planning System (ERP) capabilities on performance of public universities in Uganda.

Specific objectives

- i. Establish the role of information security and performance of universities in Uganda.
- ii. Examine the influence of management support and performance of universities in Uganda.
- iii. Evaluate the effect of information system infrastructure and performance of universities in Uganda.
- iv. Determine the relevance of service delivery and performance of universities in Uganda.

Research Hypothesis

H₁: Information security has no significant effect on performance of universities in Uganda

H₂: Management support has no significant effect on performance of universities in Uganda

H₃: Information system infrastructure has no significant effect on performance of universities in Uganda

H₄: Service delivery has no significant effect on performance of universities in Uganda

Empirical Review

Integration of Enterprise Resource Planning System (ERP) in Public Universities

As the quest for condensed cycle times, cost reduction, robust supply chains and effective inter-departmental relations in universities widen, the demand for enterprise resource planning system has also doubled. (Ahmer, 2017). Recent research shows that Enterprise Resource Planning integration cannot be avoided in public universities for dissimilar purposes. (Ahmer, 2017; Kasule & Bisaso, 2019 and Soliman & Karia, 2021). Integration of Enterprise Resource Planning System is one of the feasible approaches of planning, decision making, transforming supply chain systems and overall performance (AlMuhayfith & Shaiti, 2020). This applies as well to Public Universities. A study done in Egypt, revealed that over 112 Egyptian public universities had integrated Enterprise Resource Planning System in their operations and their national ranking performance were high, compared to those that did not. (Soliman & Karia, 2021). Related studies in Uganda and Kenya also point to this perspective (Etengu *et al.*, 2014; Kasule & Bisaso, 2019; Kipyegon, 2018 and Mayoka & kyeyune, 2016).

Universities have realized that the adoption of enterprise resource planning systems is key in achieving the integration of their management systems in order to handle effectively the increasing complex business processes. It is worth noting therefore, that integration of Enterprise Resource Planning System (ERP) is such a noble activity, that each university should embrace. However, there still remains scanty primary research for Public Universities. Predominant studies are envisioned to be online, which this study explored using a secondary data inquiry. The paucity of research in Enterprise Resource Planning integration signals shortfalls in Public Universities, to benefit from

Enterprise Resource Planning. Absence of literature addressing the integration of Enterprise Resource Planning System on Organizational Performance in Public Universities in Uganda offers a gap which this investigation focused on filling.

ERP integration and Organizational Performance in Public Universities in Uganda

Several studies have explored the concept of Organizational Performance, though not all focused on its direct relationship with Enterprise Resource Planning in Public Universities. A study by Kasule and Bisaso (2019) in Uganda Public Universities, for instance explored performance from human resource management perspective, though quick to include the relevance of Information Communication Technology. These authors also point to the integration of Enterprise Resource Planning as part of human resources control tool (Kasule & Bisaso, 2019). These scholars consequently, concluded with the view that given the current changes in technology, integration of Enterprise Resource Planning is unavoidable, whether directly related with human resources management or overall performance of the organization. Similarly, Moya *et al.*, (2011) in their study done at Kyambogo and Makerere University revealed that Information and Communication Technology has shaped events, is part of the normal processes used in higher institutions of learning, and a way to go. However, this study was not directly on Enterprise Resource Planning systems but Information and Communication Technology in general, though it made several reflections to Enterprise Resource Planning system.

Empirical evidence shows that Enterprise Resource Planning supports available infrastructure and simplified decision making processes at central and departmental levels. Whereas there is need for training, and more sensitization on how Enterprise Resource Planning works, its usefulness is indispensable in support of performance of the university (Moya *et al.*, 2011). An earlier perspective of Mayoka and Kyeyune (2016), also settled with the view that integration of Enterprise Resource Planning in activities of the university is one of the key e-practices the university can shoulder, but it's constrained by limited finances. This was partly because they focused on Private University (Nkumba University); whose financial resources are internally generated. Though their descriptive case study and focus was on e-learning activities, Mayoka and Kyeyune (2016) affirmed that well done and financed Enterprise Resource Planning is key for enhancing University Performance. This could be a key function in Public Universities, just as it was also expressed by earlier studies (Etengu *et al.*, 2014).

Relatedly, Adabara (2019) also confirmed value of Cloud-Based Academic Enterprise Resource Planning (CAERP) Model for higher institutions of learning, though her focus was also on a Private

University (Kampala International University). Other studies including Adabara (2019); Etengu *et al.* and Mayoka & Kyeyune (2016), generally infer to the fact that integration of Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems is a fundamental tool for streamlining operations. However, Adabara (2019), further opines that success of Enterprise Resource Planning will depend on how ready and able is the institution to manage privacy and security issues.

A study done by Ssozi (2012) about Enterprise Resource Planning system in Uganda also provided that Enterprise Resource Planning systems are functional department systems units of universities. Taking case of Bugema University, Ssozi (2012) revealed Enterprise Resource Planning as part of the information technologies changes that have been adopted for automation of several university activities – admission, academics, finance and other institutional departments. However, these automations contain numerous implications which are negative and costly for Private Universities (Ssozi, 2012). This would best work in Public Universities, though it was currently not the case (Adabara, 2019; Mayoka & Kyeyune, 2016). A related study done in Kenya showed a different perspective. Wekesa & Namusonge (2018) undertook a study in Kenya, and found out that Enterprise Resource Planning Systems have significant relationship on performance of public entities especially at Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology. Wekesa & Namusonge (2018) postulated that when well used, Enterprise Resource Planning can support public entities to perform better. However, the scope of its adaptation still remained low in most public universities, and its effect on overall organizational performance in these universities attracted low research coverage.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study was an on-line external desk research. Specifically, it explored past studies, reports and journal articles online that could help in establishing relationship between Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) and Organizational Performance. Desk review studies have been widely used (Novak, 1996; Panchenko & Samoilova, 2020). Secondly, our study variables were hypothesized to attract scholarly works that could be easily accessed, saving time and financial resources (Logan, 2020). Secondary data on Enterprise Resource Planning and organizational Performance, for previous study reports and journal articles, accessible online and in print. Access to these sources was through internet search engines especially Google scholar, online databases and use of open access articles. Content and Thematic analyses were adapted to analyze data so as to generate findings. Scholarly works that fell in selection criteria (between 2011 and 2022) were read, becoming basis for identified findings and discussion.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Findings from empirical studies showed that Enterprise Resource Planning was a key system but still evolving in most Ugandan Universities. A few Public Universities and secondary data covered Enterprise Resource Planning literature. Overall, Enterprise Resource Planning was practice commonly applied in manufacturing firms and small –scale and medium enterprises (SMEs) (Okumu & Buyinza, 2019; Soliman & Karia, 2021) than in Public Universities. In Public University, where it is done Enterprise Resource Planning is more dysfunctional (Adabara, 2019), and least explored overall performance of the entity. Evidence shows that though Enterprise Resource Planning has been explored in universities this has focused on human resources and finance dimensions and not entire performance of the university (Ahmer, 2017; Kasule & Bisaso, 2019). There is ardent need for survey that can cover all Public Universities in Uganda.

Empirical studies further show that Enterprise Resource Planning system was quite challenged by inadequate facilities like funding in Private Universities, yet the function exist in peripheral levels (Adabara, 2019; Mayoka & Kyeyune, 2016; Moya *et al.* 2011 and Ssozi 2012). However, in public universities where funding is complemented by government, and reasonable scope of supplies exist, Enterprise Resource Planning is not well studied. Generally, the function of Enterprise Resource Planning, is still less implemented and its effect on organizational performance was not well captured by secondary data sources. As a result, undertaking primary survey would capture the effect of Enterprise Resource Planning integration on Organizational Performance of Public Universities better.

Without a conclusive list, this study explored studies which suggested positive effect on Enterprise Resource Planning on organizational performance. However, not all these covered public universities, and exclusive for Uganda. It is quite challenging to find and report that the rate at which public universities had integrated Enterprise Resource Planning is still low. Consequently, this would benchmark further study on these constructs from a nation-wide survey perspective.

Findings show that effective practice of Enterprise Resource Planning is ideal for shaping performance (Sislian & Jaegler, 2020), functionality of other departments and consequently contribute to an overhaul of performance target accomplishment. As practice, when regularly done, Enterprise Resource Planning led to efficient resource utilization (Mwangi & Waitthaka, 2018). Additionally, it was observed that in institutions where Enterprise Resource Planning had been adapted, it acted as human resource control tool (Kasule & Bisaso, 2019), as a core facility for administration, financial control, monitoring and management. In various studies, Enterprise Resource

Planning was found appropriately relevant in supporting organizational performance (Ahmer, 2017; Schlichter *et al.*, 2020) among others, in spite of low scope of integration in public universities.

Parameters considered while assessing application of Enterprise Resource Planning in higher institutions of learning and investigated, showed that it is a path way for ascertaining performance achievement in the short and long run. However, out of the various studies, several empirical and methodological gaps were noted, to prevail in secondary data about Enterprise Resource Planning system and organization performance. For instance, number of studies with relevant findings, had been done outside Uganda, those that covered Enterprise Resource Planning integration and performance centered around human resource management, while several works did not cover public universities but small- scale and medium enterprises (SMEs).

Finally, the study was an in-depth survey covering Enterprise Resource Planning system integration in public universities in Uganda. In due course it was observed that there is need to develop a working model that can improve performance of public universities through Enterprise Resource Planning integration in Uganda.

CONCLUSION

The effect of Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems on performance of public universities, if well implemented can be positive and very critical. Most existing studies on Enterprise Resource Planning Systems and performance in universities in Uganda were done in private universities. This shows that there is a scanty ground rooted research that has focused on relationship between Enterprise Resource Planning System and performance. It is highly desirable that a staunch explanation about Enterprise Resource Planning and performance of all universities (private and public alike) should be done. The absence of a comprehensive model to evaluate the effect of Enterprise Resource Planning on performance is still observed as an inherent research problem. This makes the need for a comprehensive study imperative, especially in higher public education institutions, which will invest in issues pertaining on how Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems would be used to improve performance outcomes guided by a defined model. Therefore, the predictive role of Enterprise Resource Planning systems on performance of public universities needs a primary data grounded survey.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Public universities are continuously pushing towards attainment of organizational performance by adapting and implementing Enterprise Resource Planning Systems. Therefore, the need to evaluate the

implication of Enterprise Resource Planning Systems on public universities' performance in terms of both financial and non-financial performance is increasingly essential. Similarly, lack of conceptualized frameworks and the critical call for validated measures necessitate more research in this area in the form of further research examining the fit between Enterprise Resource Planning Systems and organizational performance in public universities. This could potentially help university mediators including suppliers, to find reasonable answers and explanation to the history of failure of Enterprise Resource Planning System in higher education. Such an investigation will help higher education organizations, as practitioners and Enterprise Resource Planning professionals, shift their attention from success and failure factors only, to more important elements such as users, task and system, and also shift their deliberation of how these elements can increase the benefits of Enterprise Resource Planning systems on public universities performance.

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