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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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## RE-IMAGINING EDUCATION AT HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS TO UNLOCK CAPACITY FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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### ABSTRACT

The research study developed a re-imagining education framework for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to support skills building of undergraduate learners to achieve economic development in Uganda, case of Makerere University. The study objectives were to; identify the challenges associated with implementation of re-imagining education in HEIs of Uganda, propose strategies to support reimagining education framework for economic development in Uganda and develop a re-imagining education framework for economic development. The learner centered design, NDP-IV and SDG4: quality education supported this study. The study used descriptive research design with a qualitative approach supported by interpretivism paradigm. The study participants were 35 undergraduate students and School Deans from the College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHUSS) at Makerere University selected using simple random and purposive sampling techniques respectively. The interview guides were used to collect data from participants for this study. Interview data was analyzed using Atlas.ti Qualitative Analysis version 10 to generate network view diagram. The findings stated that learning and teaching involves; orientation activities, participatory delivery methods, provision of learning resources, assessment and feedback to unlock the critical foresight thinking of students at HEIs. Challenges were; cost of ICT gadgets, followed by variability in curriculum, limited practical learning, absence of mentorship and limited learner support at HEIs. Strategies included; curriculum review, adoption of technology, practical work, emphasis on internship, continuous training and provision of inclusive education support re-imagining education framework at HEIs. The engagement of stakeholders; HEIs, National Council for Higher Education, Ministry of Education and Sports, private partners 'mobile network operators' and students enhances re-imagining of education framework suitable for 21<sup>st</sup> century HEIs. The study recommends that HEIs should adopt the re-imagined education framework that start with assessment criteria on competency-based learning, followed by practical work, dynamic student support, adoption of technology, innovative curriculum review and emphasis on internship to support networked learning that fit this 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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## INTRODUCTION

Globally, there is a growing concern about re-imagining education for economic development by the various stakeholders in education especially universities, government and private partners. The skills development of learners at university is aligned with requirements of NDP-IV: Human capital index as well as SDG4: quality education and SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth.

Although the issue of skills enhancement through research and innovation is emphasized to undergraduate students, there is minimum attention on re-imagining education for human capital development (OECD, 2023). Re-imagining of education at HEIs is a challenge in Uganda due to increased number of job seekers than creators which constrain economic development. The skills inefficiency among the undergraduate students worsened during and after COVID-19 pandemic due to increased unemployment (Bakers et

al., 2023). According to UNESCO (2020) in their international survey on education, more than 20,000 students in six countries, including Germany, China, Netherland, Spain, South Africa and Indonesia lacked required skills to match with the employable competencies on the market. Additionally, the survey showed that students in undergraduate programs are faced with skills gap to explore the resources in the environment. In 2020, the education system changed tremendously from knowledge-based to competency-based learning which necessitated re-imagining education at HEIs to unlock capacity for economic development (OECD, 2023). Developing competency of learners justified the use of artificial intelligence to foster skills building desired for exploitation of global opportunities. The shift in learning at HEIs from knowledge acquisition to output on job market is driven by the need for learners to apply the acquired competencies to support economic development. In the United States of America, skills building is emphasized among the undergraduate learners with support of skills building strategies such as practical and vocational learning at HEIs (Sengeh & Winthrop, 2022). Achievement of SDGs by 2030 shall depend on the innovations that are aligned to Fifth Generation teaching and learning through re-imagining education with a clear framework. In Sub-Saharan Africa, skills inefficiency among the undergraduate students limit them to find jobs on the market and are not equipped to create employment for themselves (Rebecca, Michael, John, 2024). The universities encounter challenges in developing engaging and equitable teaching and learning strategies to embed student creativity and critical thinking in the re-imagining education for economic development (Lakhno, 2022). Limited exploration of opportunities for self-employment dominates the young generation of undergraduates which leaves a question on relevance of education to support economic development. In Uganda, skills inefficiency dominates the quality of human capital which increases unemployment among undergraduate students, but there is no study that has been done to focus on re-imagining education for economic development. According to the Makerere University Strategic Plan 2020–2030, the university is desirous to increase the competency of undergraduate students as research led university to increase knowledge generation. The limited skills possessed by the undergraduate students signals under development of human capital which forces Uganda to export maids, waitresses, guards and casual labourers to the Arab countries (Hand, 2023). Little is known about re-imagining education to spur economic development to achieve vision 2040. The goal of this research study was to develop a Re-imagining Education Framework for Human Capital Development (REFHCD) among undergraduate students at HEIs.

**Research Problem:** The shocks of COVID-19 in Africa left some HEIs constrained with delivery methods for learning continuity to enable learners support economic development due to lack of a re-imagining education framework (Sia, et.al, 2023). The access to education for skills building by learners was a challenge since 65% were not yet skilled due to ineffective competency-based learning in the university education system (OECD, 2021). The shift from teaching objectives to intended learning outcomes that are aligned with competency-based learning has not yet been achieved at HEIs due to mismatch between acquired skills and job market requirements (MoES, 2022). Makerere University's commitment to empower students to reach their full potential, fostering a future where opportunities are boundless and inclusive remains a challenge due to limited innovative behavior exhibited by undergraduate students (Rasheed, 2023, NCHE, 2022). In post-COVID-19, emphasis of internet-based education has encouraged lecturers, students and administrators to go online for learning. However, teaching is ineffectively implemented and skills building is remotely achieved which requires developing of a Re-imagining Education Framework for Economic Development in Uganda. Case of Makerere University.

**Purpose of the study:** This research study developed a Re-imagining Education Framework for HEIs to support skills building of undergraduate learners to achieve economic development in Uganda, case of Makerere University.

## Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study were to;

- 1) Identify the challenges associated with implementation of Re-imagining Education in HEIs of Uganda, case of Makerere University.
- 2) Propose strategies to support Reimagining Education framework for economic development in Uganda.
- 3) Develop a Re-imagining education framework for economic development.

**Justification:** The need to support economic development through enhanced human capital is important for unlocking low middle income economies (Aparicio-Molina & Sepúlveda-López, 2023). Patras *et al.* (2023) argues that education is vital to unlock economic development through effective resource utilization by the skilled labour force among the natives. In Uganda, natives are excluded in exploration and value addition on resources due to inadequate skills. The foreigners dominate the resources value addition and largely employ local people to perform basic work which earns them low remuneration (Shaito, 2019). The focus on education system advancement is prioritized globally as a pillar of economic development. The contribution of human capital development is known although not yet comprehensively undertaken in the curriculum at HEIs (Chu *et al.*, 2018). The increased number of undergraduate degree holders who are job seekers and who end up jobless to the extent of exporting their labor force as maids, askari and waitresses indicate a weak education system in Uganda. Graduates from HEIs rate their competency to a maid, waiter and driver in Arabic countries (Maseke *et al.*, 2021). This shows how government investing in education needs rethinking to equip HEIs with re-imagined framework to develop learners' skills for 21<sup>st</sup> century job market.

## Significance

**The university:** The re-imagining education framework will support faculty to onlinize content for delivery to learners of this Fifth Generation in HEIs to support the human capital development which aligns with the requirements in NDP-IV. The HEIs are at the center of economic transformation through development of competent labor force that match with the global market demands.

**Students:** The re-imagining education framework will allow students to participate in learning and teaching to unlock their capacity to support economic transformation. The students will take personalized routes for self-discovery, choosing why, where and when they want to study.

**Government:** The framework will support government in setting up policies for improving education at HEIs to meet requirements of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century job market. The NCHE will benchmark the re-imagining framework on education to facilitate updating of the ODeL delivery methods with focus on learner centered mode aligned with the competency-based learning. The framework is a strategy for economic foundation to achieve vision 2040 through the innovative and entrepreneurial quality of graduates from HEIs in Uganda.

**Foundation of learning and teaching process for re-imagining education in HEIs:** The re-imagining of education is associated with how learning and teaching activities jointly unlock learners' capacity to support economic development. The education pedagogy requires learner engagement to enhance co-creation of knowledge for human capital development. Aldhafeeri (2023) stated that learners' engagement is vital in teaching and learning since they are the end users of content resources. The learners' co-creation of knowledge on developed content resources is a vital component to validate their level of competency on the intended learning outcomes. Learner engagement involves active participation, enthusiasm, and commitment of individuals in the learning process, going beyond

mere attendance and involving an emotional connection to the material, fostering curiosity, and a desire to explore and learn. Mwita and Onyango (2022) stated that students attend to assigned tasks once informed about their relevance to economic development. The validation of learners' knowledge and experiences accelerate their engagement and interaction to tasks which develop their competencies to support national economic development. Aldhafeeri (2023) stated that knowledge sharing geared towards learning and teaching support re-imagining education to unlock capacity of undergraduates to contribute to economic development. Knowledge sharing on content resource inspires active learning that is vital for building learners' competencies at HEIs. The assessment and feedback are modalities undertaken to determine the scope of content resources perceived and understood by learners during the learning and teaching process at HEIs. Almaiah and Alyoussef (2019) stated that feedback on assessment allow the undergraduate students to close the gaps where a failure is recognized and re-conceptualize what has been marked as correct by the faculty. In addition, Bin-Mohd-Aris and Mansor (2023) stated that learning resources are difficult to dispense off in learning and teaching process at HEIs. Learners are assessed based on the provided and accessible online learning resources in HEIs.

**Challenges associated with learning and teaching for re-imagining education in HEIs:** The challenges associated with learning and teaching range from ICT affordances, institutional support services and student related factors that impair the re-imagining of education system in learner centered eco-system for HEIs. Shahbaznezhad *et al.* (2021) stated that high cost of ICT gadgets limits their accessibility by learners to participate in networked learning. The cost of ICT gadgets determines the affordance levels to support re-imagining of education system for HEIs. The variability of curriculum is a challenge affecting uniformity of skills possessed by undergraduate learners at HEIs. Aldhafeeri (2023) stated that variability in curriculum impair the quality of education offered at HEIs. The curriculum has to be uniform for the courses that demand similar skills on the job market. The differences in the way a curriculum is structured on a similar course offered from universities have remained a challenge to re-imagining education system in Uganda. Gorghiu (2021) stated that inadequate practical skills to implement student-centered learning at all the levels deters learners from acquiring quality education at HEIs. Practical skills empower undergraduate learners with desired competencies to explore available resources for economic development. In addition, Ukpabio *et al.* (2023) stated that absence of mentorship strategies among undergraduate learners slows down their career development resilience to unlock their competency for economic transformation. The absence of mentors at HEIs limits student's ability to develop confidence and capabilities to take on challenges and make significant strides in their career path for sustainable economic development.

**Strategies to support re-imagining education framework for economic development:** Gorghiu (2021) stated that building learner competency on public presentation and communication skills are key components desired for self-expression in the community to serve the job market. Building learners' competency based on the course undertaken at HEIs is a consideration for re-imagining education system. Aparicio-Molina and Sepúlveda-López (2023) stated that continuous professional training of lecturers and learners and adoption to technology facilitate learning and teaching to re-imagine the education system to spur economic development. The professional continuous development reminds lecturers on what is expected from them as well as modern delivery pedagogy that meets the job market demands. Bayyat *et al.* (2021) stated that blended learning facilitates use of face to face and online session lecture fostering re-imagining of education. Blended learning integrates online learning tools with traditional classroom instruction suitable for delivery of content resources desired by learners of 21st Century at HEIs (Stapa & Mohammad, 2019). The blended learning mode facilitates a learning environment that offers flexibility and diverse learning resources desired for re-imagining education at HEIs for economic development.

**Contextualization of re-imagining education framework:** The re-imagining of education framework undertakes learner centered instruction principles and design. The education framework was developed from learner-centered instruction principles by Parrish (2019). The learner-centered instruction empowers learners to participate actively in the learning process. At the same time, learners take on a more proactive role, influencing course content and activities and actively reflecting on their learning. The consolidation of student experience with faculty was the foundation for the framework that promotes collaboration, innovation and excellence to deliver quality education. Re-imagined education promotes teaching excellence and drives innovation as well as creativity by learners support economic development in this Fifth Generation. The validation of learners' knowledge and experiences, instructional goals, course content and activities, class interaction and language usage in learning resources facilitate learners to follow the instruction during the learning and teaching process. The re-imagining education framework is activated from learner centered design to provide a standardized approach to link students with faculty to enhance critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration (Soloway, *et al.*, 1994). The educator enablement and development support setting of learning outcome with inclusion of graduate identity, innovation curriculum design and delivery, effective practice and assessment design, next generation learning environment, use of transformative technologies like LMS Moodle, equip learners with employable skills on market (Aldhafeeri, 2023). The learner centered mode is vital consideration during re-imagining of education to deliver quality services at HEIs. The competency based learning requires attention on learner centered mode to prioritize their needs in formulation of the intended learning outcome to support implementation of the NDP-IV in Uganda (Peramunugamage *et al.*, 2024). The education system has to integrate learner centered mode to develop competency of undergraduate students to engage and support economic development. The learner centered principles and design are demonstrated below;

#### Learner-Centered Instruction by Parrish (2019)



#### Learner centered design (Soloway, *et al.*, 1994)



## METHODOLOGY

**Introduction:** The methodology guides the process of carrying out aresearch study (Creswell, 2018). It covers; a study design, study participants, selection of participants, sampling selection, data collection methods and tools, quality control of the data collection tools and data analysis.

**Study design:** The study used descriptive research designwith a qualitative approach. Descriptive research design determines the characteristics of a population or particular phenomenon (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Using descriptive research design, the researcher identified patterns in the characteristics of respondents to essentially understand their thoughts about the study. Qualitative approach involved gathering of non-numerical data from the respondents for this study. Interpretivism paradigm with ontological aspect guided the study.

**Study participants:** The study participantsinvolved undergraduate students and Deans from the selected Colleges at Makerere University. Makerere university has 9 constituent colleges: College of Humanities and Social Science, College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, College of Business and Management Sciences, College of Computing and Information Sciences, College of Education and External Studies, College of Engineering, Design, Art and Technology, College of Health Sciences, College of Natural Sciences, College of Veterinary Medicine, Animal Resources and Biosecurity and School of Law as unit of analysis.

**Selection of participants:** The study selected a total of 35 key participants from the CHUSS. The key participants involved six students selected in each course; Bachelor of Arts (Social Sciences), Bachelor of Industrial and Organizational Psychology, Bachelor of Community Psychology, Bachelor of Development Studies, Bachelor of Journalism and Communication and 5 students pursuing Diploma in Performing Arts. The Deans and coordinators from the CHUSS as well as a representative from the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES)were selected for this study. The selected participants were units of inquiry at the college. The study used G-Power software computed [www.gpower-feedback@uni-duesseldorf.de](http://www.gpower-feedback@uni-duesseldorf.de) (Hyun-Kang, 2021) sample size determination tool for larger population to select the 35 participants at CHUSS. An appropriate power analysis for this case ( $1-\beta$ ), significance level ( $\alpha$ ), and effect size and the dependent was the wanted sample size. The study assumedlarge effect size of 0.70 at the 0.05 level of significance ( $\alpha$ ), and maximum power ( $1-\beta$ ) of 0.99 to determine the participants who provided data for the study. The G-power software was preferred to determine appropriate effect sample size for large population for the study.

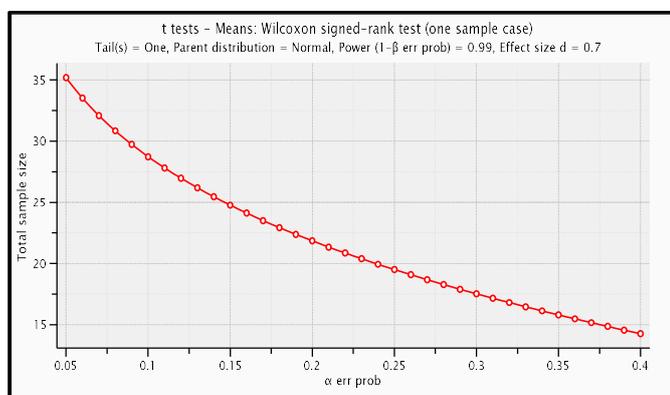


Figure 1. Sample size determination

The CHUSS was selected to represent other colleges based on its high student population. The identification of college was followed by selection of participants for this research study.

**Sampling selection:** The purposive sampling was used to select course representatives. In addition, simple random method was adopted to select undergraduate students to participate in this study. The officials at MoES, schoolDeans and coordinators of undergraduate students were purposively involved in this study. Proportionate consideration was adopted to spread the sample frame to all the years of study. Simple random sampling gave equal chance to undergraduate students to be included in the study. The purposive sampling technique selected the respondents with caution on year of study to ensure that participants are well represented to provide informed opinion(s). The convenience was integrated to choose students within the proximity and vicinity to participate in the study. Opportunistic method entailed selection of a case based on specific characteristics to capitalize on developing events occurring during data collection for comprehensive framework.

**Data collection method and tools:** The study used interview data collection method to engage with participants. Data was cross-sectional in nature and gathered using an interview guide as a tool (Fang *et al.*, 2020). The structured interview guides accommodated open-ended questions designed following the research objectives about the challenges and strategies to support development of the re-imagining education framework for HEIs in Uganda. The interview guidesfor students and school Deans were pre-tested and adjusted to ensure collected data is suitable for answering research questions for this study. The interview data were captured using a pen and note books while recordings were done using a voice recorder after the consent from the participants.

**Quality control of the data collection tools:** The accuracy of data gathered by interview guides was ensured using a structured approach which involved a setting of clear and concise questions, pre-testing, and feedback mechanisms that supported identification and addressing of ambiguities or biases. The expert review supported the truthfulness and correctness of the information gathered with the interview guide in this study. The experts provided suggestions to eliminate and delete items on the interview guide to enhance data quality for this study. In addition, quality controls were initiated right at design of interview questions based on literature review and kept monitored throughout the process to completion.

**Data processing and analysis:** Data was transcribed in word form and later uploaded in Atlas.ti Qualitative Analysis version 10 for analysis. The use of Atlas.ti enabled generation of meaningful schematic diagrams which summarized the findings to support developing the re-imagining education framework for human capital development at HEIs. The axial code was used to identify the themes from the interviews to answer the research question for this study. Visual networks were used to present the data which supported formulation of re-imagined education framework in HEIs for human capital development. The interview data supported formulation of re-imagined education framework at HEIs to enhance human capital development. The study took six months from proposal writing, developing data collection tools, pre-test of tools, field data collection, analysis and report writing. The report supported writing of the journal article. The competency-based ideology with integration of learner centered model were at the center of this re-imagined framework for delivery of quality education to support economic development.

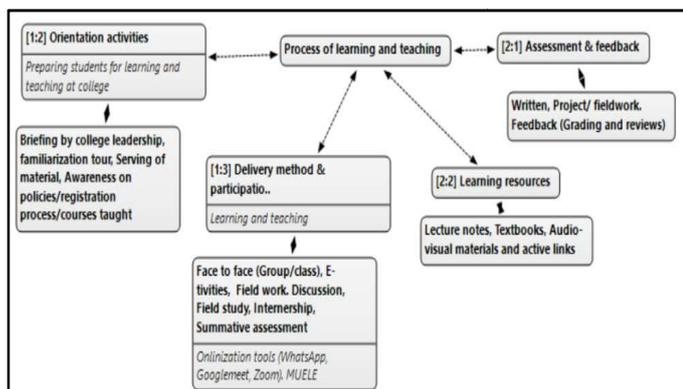
**Ethical implications:** The standard ethical considerations were followed in this study. These included; avoid plagiarism by duly referencing the scholars, confidentiality-not including the names or other forms of identifiers where axial codes were used, seeking consent of respondents and communication of the findings, exercising high level of integrity and objectivity to focus on the agenda of the study (Kothari *et al.*, 2020). All funds were entirely allocated and absorbed in the research activities to ensure transparency and accuracy of the data collected on re-imagining education framework to turn around the ineffective practices in the delivery methods at HEIs.

## PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

**Introduction:** The findings are presented and discussed following the research objectives of this study. The chapter begins with demographic data followed by findings on; process of learning and teaching, challenges and strategies to support re-imagining education at HEIs to unlock capacity for economic development. The learner centered mode was used as lens to guide the formulation of the re-imagining framework for the HEIs to support human capital development. The findings are demonstrated by the network visual illustrations that consolidated views from the respondents. The participants' responses are presented with axial codes that is students indicated as S1 to Sn and academic leaders as A1 to An. The Atlas.ti version 10 generated the connectivity of responses based on the second code which determines the strength of the factors. The findings are discussed in relation to the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with what is provided by other scholars in literature.

**Demographic factors:** Gender of respondents was taken into consideration and achieved with representation of 21 female and 14 male participants in this study. The participants were selected in all years from year 1 to year 3. In addition, all the five programs; Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Development Studies, Bachelor of Industrial and Organizational Psychology and Bachelor of Journalism and communication and Diploma in performing arts were represented in this study. The heads of departments and program coordinators gave their views on re-imagining education to unlock economic development.

**Process of learning and teaching supported with learner centered mode:** The interviewees stated that the process of learning and teaching involves; orientation activities, selection of delivery methods to attract learner participation, provision of learning resources, assessment and feedback to unlock the critical foresight thinking of students at HEIs. Learning is at the center of co-creation of knowledge to re-imagining the education system that suits capacity building to support economic development. The key attributes of learning and teaching process follow the learner centered instructions as demonstrated below.



**Figure 2. Attributes on process of learning and teaching at HEI**

The principles of learning and teaching process take consideration to; validate learners' knowledge during orientation, specify classroom interactions aligned to delivery methods to unlock active participation, identify learning resources, assign classroom tasks supported with assessment and feedback. Interviewee A2 stated that,

*“education pedagogy for fifth generation requires undertaking of learners at the center of learning and teaching process. Engagement of learners at all levels of learning and teaching from preparation to the setting of intended learning outcomes to*

*the selection of learning resources all support delivery of quality education for human capital development”.*

The desire to unlock learners' competencies for economic development requires prioritization of learners. Placing learners at the center of the learning process is supported by Aldhafeeri (2023) who stated that learners engagement is vital in teaching and learning since they are the end users of content resources. The learners develop their competency on the intended learning out comes whenever engaged at all levels of learning and teaching at HEIs.

Provision of orientation activities to undergraduate students prepares them to effectively learn and achieve the set objectives of the course. Orientation involves; briefing by the college leadership, conducting familiarization tour, serving materials, creation of awareness on university policies, description of courses taught, contact hours, grades as well as classes of award (First class, Second class and Third class) plus the course implication on the job market. Interviewee S2 mentioned that; *“Academic advancement from secondary to university necessitates orientation on how the program is conducted since it is from a controlled learning process by the teachers to freedom learning pedagogy by lecturers”.*

In addition, interviewee A3 stated that; *“Learners at secondary level are controlled fully due to their age bracket (12 years for senior one to average 19 years in senior six) accommodated at school”.* However, students above 19 years are also admitted and controlled like teenagers at secondary level of education. The relevance of orientation activities are recommended by (Castelah Education & Potential Report (2024) which stated that orientation activities are critical to welcome admitted students on the course at HEIs.

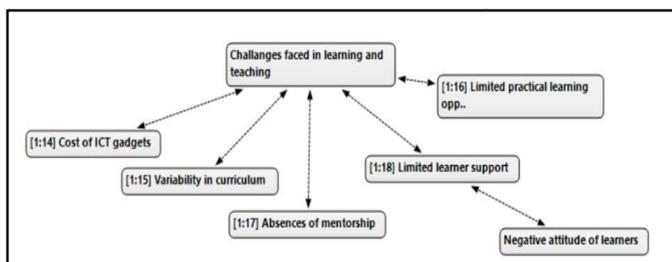
The preparation of learners during orientation period alerts them to stay vigilant on the program from the first year to the third year. This was emphasized by interviewee S10 who mentioned that; *“vigilance helps the admitted learners at university to stay focused to develop their competencies which unlock their capacity to support economic development”.* The orientation of students on what a course requires, how it aligns with the current national development plan (NDP- IV) and sustainable development goal SDG 4: quality education as well as other resolutions unlocks their capacity to contribute to economic development. This finding is supported by Mwita and Onyango (2022) who stated that students attend to assigned tasks once they are informed about their relevance to economic development. Interviewees mentioned that the dominant delivery methods; face to face, field work, setting e-tivities, discussion and internship support learning and teaching fit for this fifth generation. The internship allows the student to demonstrate the learnt content under supervision of placement manager at workplace and later the university supervisor. The mentioned delivery methods prepare learners to undertake a summative assessment for grading on a particular course unit at HEIs.

Besides face to face as a traditional teaching and learning pedagogy, virtual learning through MUELE supported by communication tools such as zoom, WhatsApp and Google meet provide an opportunity for learning and teaching continuity to develop competency of the learners at HEIs. Interviewee S20 stated that; *“blend of the delivery methods; face to face and virtual learning enhance knowledge sharing to develop competency of the learners for economic development”.* The finding is in agreement with Aldhafeeri (2023) who stated that knowledge sharing geared towards learning and teaching is vital in re-imagining education to unlock capacity of undergraduates to contribute to economic development.

Learners undertake various assessments inform of; written, field/project work, performance, presentation, and online e-tivities to develop their capacity to acquire skills that support economic development. Interviewee S23 stated that; *“Grades build the learners confidence to accelerate their innovative behavior, self-trust in case of exceptionally good scores and resilience to support economic development”.* In addition, interviewee A2 mentioned that; *“Grading*

of students using coursework, presentation, field work, research reports, sit-in tests and final examination is vital to build their confidence on content studied on a course unit of a particular programme at university". The timely feedback during assessment is supported by Almaiah and Alyoussef (2019) who stated that feedback on assessment allow the students to close the gaps where a failure is recognized and mastered where it has been marked correct by the lecturer. The learning resources provided in form of; lecture notes, textbooks, audio-visual materials and active links on developed content resource on MUELE build effective learning solution. The learning resources are vital tools to support learning and teaching. However, they have to be selectively developed after consideration of learners, NDP-IV, SDGs among other national resolutions to support economic transformation. Interviewee S16 stated the; "learning resources conceptualized with domesticated content and practical tasks support academic resilience of learners to unlock their capacity to innovatively foster economic development". The importance of domesticated learning resources is supported by Bin-Mohd-Aris and Mansor (2023) who stated that learning resources are difficult to dispense off in learning and teaching process at HEIs. Learning resources are geometrically desired to effectively deliver quality education at HEIs.

**Challenges associated with re-imagining education at HEIs:** The dominant challenges include; cost of ICT gadgets, followed by variability in curriculum, limited practical learning, absence of mentorship and limited learner support at HEIs. The challenges associated with learning and teaching need consideration to re-imagining education system as demonstrated below.

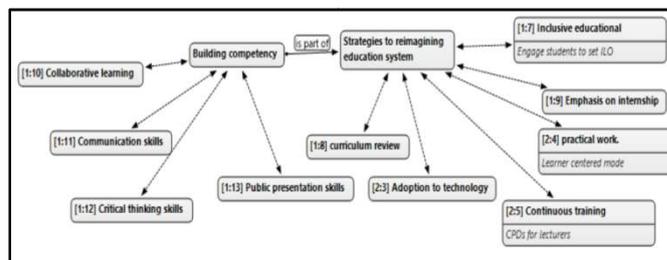


**Figure 3. Challenges faced in learning and teaching that affect re-imagining education system**

The cost of ICT gadgets; laptops, smartphones and data bundles vary greatly depending on the specific device, features, functionality and brand, but generally, prices have become more affordable over time, with low-cost options becoming increasingly available. The high costs of ICT gadgets hinders re-imagining of education as supported by Shahbaznezhad *et al.* (2021) who stated that high cost of ICT gadgets limit accessibility by learners for networked learning on LMS. The variability in a curriculum a similar course pursued by students at HEIs make them to graduate with varying skills, knowledge and values. The curriculum variability depends on strength, challenges, and learning styles feasible for a particular HEIs rather than assuming a one-size-fits-all approach. Interviewee S5 stated that; "we can be graduate of Bachelors of Journalism and Communication from different HEIs and have different course units and techniques for performing tasks in the field". The variation in a curriculum at HEIs hindered re-imagining of education system as supported by Aldhafeeri (2023) who stated that variability in curriculum impairs the quality of education offered at HEIs. Limited practical learning deters learners' capability to unlock their competencies to acquire skills desired on job market to support economic development. Interview S18 stated that, "Limited practical learning is an educational approach or situation where hands-on, real-world application and engagement are restricted or insufficient". The limited practical skills as supported by Gorghiu (2021) who stated that inadequate practical skills to implement student-centered learning at all the levels hinder implementation of competency based pedagogy to unlock capacity for economic development. The limited learner support in terms of; access to resources, information, counseling and other social practices to help them succeed in their education potentially hinder their ability to participate fully learning

and teaching process at HEIs. Interviewee A3 emphasized that; "Limited learner support occurs when HEIs fail to provide the necessary tools, assistance, or guidance for students to overcome learning difficulties or barriers to develop skills for human capital development". The learner support inefficiency hinders their skills development at HEIs. The absence of mentorship limits learners' insight to identify areas for conceptualization as career path for them which support economic development. Interviewee S7 stated that; "absence of mentorship leads to wasted potential, missed opportunities and stalled growth, particularly in areas like career development, skill acquisition, and building confidence of under graduate at HEIs. The challenge is emphasized by Ukpabio *et al.* (2023) who stated that absence of mentorship strategy among undergraduate learners slows down their career development resilience to unlock their competencies for economic transformation.

**Strategies to support re-imagining education framework for economic development:** The strategies were; curriculum review, adoption of technology, practical work, emphasis on internship, continuous training and provision of inclusive education at HEIs. Interviewee A1 mentioned that; "blending of learning and teaching to spur inclusive education and networked learning enables learners to effectively co-create knowledge feasible to support economic development". The learner centered mode supports action learning desired for re-imagining framework for economic development as set out below.



**Figure 4. Strategies to re-imagining education system HEIs**

The mentioned strategies in figure 6 are important to unlock learner's capacity to position him/her self on the job market for economic development. The public presentation and communication skills enable learners to deliver information clearly to a target audience, thus become indispensable considerations to re-imagining education system. This is supported by Gorghiu (2021) who stated that building learner competency on public presentation and communication skills are key components desired for self-expression in the community to serve the job market. The continuous training of learners, adoption of technology and prioritization of practical work support the re-imagining of education framework to suit this generation of innovation in tasks execution. Technology adoption supports networked learning through connection between content resources, faculty and learners on the LMS. The adoption of technology and continuous training is supported by Aparicio-Molina and Sepúlveda-López (2023) who stated that continuous training of lecturers and learners and adoption of technology facilitate co-creation of knowledge during learning and teaching to re-imagine the education system to accelerate economic development. Similarly, Bayyat *et al.* (2021) stated that blended learning facilitates learning and teaching using face to face and online session lectures which enhance networked learning to unlock learners capacity for economic transformation. The curriculum review and emphasis on internship are considerations for re-imagining education system for human capital development. The curriculum needs continuous review to match with the NDP-IV, SDG 4: quality education and requirements of NCHE to support re-imagining of education in the HEIs. The curriculum review with inclusion of the interests from the stakeholders to develop content resources justifies its relevance to unlock capacity for economic development.

**Re-imagined education system framework for HEIs:** The framework is adopted from the learner centered design (Soloway, Guzdial &

Hay, 1994). This re-imagining framework is supported by the strategies from the selected participants. The stakeholders such as government, MoES, NCHE, HEIs, vendors of ICT gadgets support the implementation of the re-imagined education framework.

### Recommendations and dissemination

The recommendations on how to implement re-imagining framework are presented below;

**Contextualized perspective:** There is need for creation of awareness about the suggested re-imagined education framework in learners' environment in Uganda. The NCHE and MoES are mandated to provide guidelines and procedures to the university council on the feasible way to implement re-imagined education framework. The different HEIs undertake education system in various ways which make the graduate not fit on the job market. The policy guidelines have to embrace SDGs, requirements of NCHE and NDP-IV to validate this framework to ensure delivery of quality education to unlock capacity of learners to support economic development. The learner centered mode as emphasized in the re-imagined education framework is vital to enhance co-creation of knowledge during learning and teaching at HEIs. Therefore, learners are custodians of the designed content since they have to digest or filter it to identify strategies feasible to solve the challenges in the real world.

**Institutional perspective:** There is need for re-alignment of; Makerere University strategic plan on research led and innovative learning and teaching, ODeL policy and NCHE to emphasize re-imagined education framework that focuses on learner centeredness. Makerere University should review policy in relation to the following; content delivery methods, curriculum review protocol, research, innovation and development, student support services, private partner engagement, course materials development and funding of internship and practical tasks.

**Management perspective:** Makerere University has to develop a mechanism to implement the re-imagined education framework to support the strategic direction and governance of all available resources to unlock capacity of students to contribute to economic development. The university has to integrate the re-imagined education framework to develop competencies of undergraduate students to match with the requirements of 21<sup>st</sup> century job market. The management integrity and team work from the faculty play a key role in the implementation of the re-imagined education framework. The University council, principals at colleges, DVCAA and DVC F&A, director legal affairs, university secretary, eLearning administrator, undergraduate students, academic registry, quality assurance, dean of students and NCHE support the implementation of the re-imagined education system in the HEIs. The stakeholders should pilot the framework on any academic program of their choice before roll out for implementation.

**Pedagogical perspective:** There is need for university to serve its admitted students per cohort an updated curriculum that match with the trend in the environment based on the re-imagined education framework. The university has to make continuous retooling of the faculty to equip them with skills desired to support learners develop competencies that aligns with NDP-IV and SDGs to support economic development. Moreover, blended learning and teaching is aligned with desired education strategies once supported with reviewed curriculum that unify all the HEIs to produce a competent graduate with capacity to contribute to economic transformation. The learners will be guided as they build their competencies in the learning environment to develop academic resilience to do their best to support economic transformation.

**Connectivity framework perspective:** There is need for university to involve private partners and academic as well as non-academic staff to integrate their inputs in the re-imagined framework to support networked learning. The affordances available to learners need

consideration and testing to ensure that they support learning and teaching at optimum level. The mobile network operations; UCC and NITA (U) as well as HEIs, NCHE, development partners, line ministries-departments support the implementation of re-imagined education system. The social learning supports implementation of the re-imagined education framework in HEIs. The supporting factors are institutional, national and those from individual students as beneficiaries of the re-imagined education framework as demonstrated below.

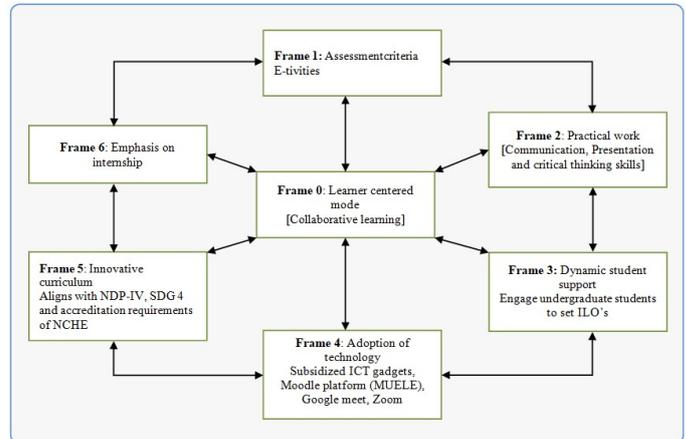


Figure 5. Re-imagined education system 2025

The re-imagined education framework starts with assessment design, followed by practical work, dynamic student support, adoption of technology, innovative curriculum review and emphasis on internship to support networked learning that fit this 21<sup>st</sup> century HEIs. The learner centered mode is the engine that connects other components to formulate a framework to support delivery of quality education in HEIs. Faculty, NCHE, parent's students and private partners are required to support this education system framework. The learner centered mode is preferred since traditional institutional arrangements are no longer conducive to optimal learning environments in 21<sup>st</sup> century (Rebecca, et. al, 2024).

**Ethical perspective:** The university should come up with a policy and guidelines to safeguard staff and management as well as ensuring student safety while participating in the re-imagined framework once implemented. The learning will consider the learners interest and evaluate them to suite requirement for economic development to achieve vision 2040.

**Translation and dissemination:** The research findings on re-imagining education framework were disseminated in the electronic and hardcopies to the Ministry of Education and Sports to formulate the policy on developing skills to the undergraduates which are relevant on the job market. The stakeholders received a copy on re-imagining education framework for inclusivity skills to foster economic development. Makerere University and other HEIs received electronic copies of the re-imagining education framework to guide them in harnessing their policy for streamlining competency-based learning among undergraduate students to prepare them to become relevant on the job market.

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