

CAPACITY OF HIGHER LEARNING INSTITUTIONS TO TAP BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES IN THE EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY: A CASE OF COLLEGE OF BUSINESS EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

This paper evaluates the capacity of higher learning institutions to tap business opportunities in the East African Community (EAC) following signing of the trade facilitation protocol in 2010, a move that opened doors for organizations to do business in the enlarged market. Although doors are opened for business, higher learning institutions in Tanzania including the College of Business Education (CBE) have been confined to the local market. This study examines the capacity of these institutions in tapping business opportunities in the EAC market. A case study research design was adapted and quantitative data collected using structured questionnaires. The study was guided by innovative theory “Creative Destruction” and Resource Based View (RBV). A sample of 32 respondents was randomly selected so as to avoid bias. Data were analyzed using tabular method and critical variables were used to draw the conclusion. The main findings indicate that the emerged opportunities are not tapped by Tanzanian Higher Learning Institutions (HLIs) as opposed to other universities in developed countries due to having some weaknesses that need to be addressed.

Keywords: EAC, Business Opportunities and capacity to tap

INTRODUCTION

In the last few decades, higher education (HE) market has become a global phenomenon. It appears that there is a growing mobility of students and staff, cross-border delivery of education, export and import of education products and services, harmonization of curricula, inter-institutional co-operation in education and research and the establishment of International University Consortia (EAC, 2000). To facilitate the internationalization of HLIs, certainly the role played by regional integration cannot be underestimated. Such a role, however, does not limit institutions from moving to other members of the EAC.

Regional integration has historically been viewed as an influential process whereby time and space have been compressed and, geographical borders between nations have been broken down, not only for trade, capital and information but also for education. Regional integration can open up opportunities and/or pose challenges to each country on the nation's specific circumstances. As a result, HLIs in many countries are working hard to tap the opportunities and arrest the uncertainties resulting from regional integration. In the East African context, the establishment of the East African Community (EAC) has clear implications on higher education among member countries (EAC, 2000).

A Brief Overview of East Africa Community (EAC)

The EAC is a regional inter-governmental organization established under Article 2 of the Treaty for the Establishment of the East African Community that entered into force in July 2000. The member states are the United Republic of Tanzania, Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda (EAC, 2000).

Key Features of EAC and their Implications on Higher Education

Studies indicate that the labour market demands have changed, giving rise to a free movement of human resource across countries within and outside the region. To facilitate Regional Integration process and especially free movement of human resource, there is need to harmonize education in East Africa (EAC, 2010). Higher education is becoming more competitive from a variety of perspectives, therefore, institutions within individual member states must manage costs; there is also a growing need for specializing and communicating unique messages to an expanding marketplace (EAC, 2010). A solid marketing strategy can, therefore, directly affect the bottom line of a college, university or a

continuing education institution through measurement and understanding of its position in the marketplace and by eliminating weaknesses and building upon the strengths (EAC, 2010).

The need for HLIs to formulate strategies and expand their business becomes necessary for an institution to compete and succeed in today's marketplace. Also, the establishment of the Inter University Council of East Africa (IUCEA) as a regulatory organ has facilitated business among HLIs of the EAC hence opening doors for business partnerships and competition (EAC, 2010). On the sub regional cooperation, the EAC has maintained strong bonds of collaboration with COMESA and SADC under the tripartite arrangements and IGAD sub-regions in the endeavour of establishing a wider regional market to support rapid industrialization and expansion of trade. The mission of IUCEA is to encourage and develop mutually beneficial collaboration between Universities, member States and other public and private institutions and organizations. During the period under review (**not indicated anywhere**), the IUCEA planned to promote the voice of East African universities. The IUCEA, as an academic organ, has the following functions for HLIs in East Africa:

- a) Strengthening of regional communications through networks that link regional member universities to relevant sites in East Africa and beyond.
- b) Assisting and encouraging the development of East African higher learning institutions and encourage collaboration in regional research; and
- c) Promoting inter-university cooperation, application of ICT and networking of member universities, distance education in the region's higher education systems, and promoting lifelong learning and thereby assisting universities to develop centres of advanced study and research on a rationalized basis.

The operations of IUCEA are supported by the existence of conducive policies for higher education in the partner states and accepted EA protocol. The IUCEA has continued collaborating with local and international partners to support researchers, teaching staff and students to undertake research and deliberate on pertinent academic and governance issues in East African Universities (EAC, 2010). The presence of supportive global initiatives to EAC, large market due to high population (141.1 million people), good economies of scale and free trade among partner states have stimulated trade

whereby intra-EAC trade grew by 40% between 2005 and 2009. In terms of goods and services, Uganda's exports to Kenya increased more than tenfold from USD15.5 million in 2004 to USD172 million in 2009, while Tanzania's exports to Kenya over the same period nearly tripled, from USD 95.5 million to USD 300 million (EAC,2010). The IUCEA formation has facilitated mobility of professors from one country to another as employees to a foreign university, as part of an academic partnership between universities in the member states. This has created an opportunity of getting qualified academic staff from different areas of the EAC (EAC, 2010).

Factors Influencing Ability to Tap Opportunities

Business growth under the current competitive environment is a crucial factor that can enable an organization to be sustainable in the market. In order to grow in the market, an organization needs to capture more opportunities by extending to new markets. In order to achieve this goal, the organization needs to consider factors influencing ability to tap opportunities which include: the cost of education, availability of competitive courses, availability of adequate number of competent staff, good infrastructure such as presence of online services, and other important facilities) and the perceived academic superiority of the institution in the host country (Kleinknecht & Reijnen, 1992).

The key issue focused by this study is the localization syndrome practiced by most HLIs within the EAC that has made them conduct business with an internal focused style and yet failed to open up business across borders to tap the emerging market opportunities in the harmonized EAC large market. In developed countries the situation is different. For example in India, education institutions are not just satisfied with the domestic market. Many of them are increasingly venturing out and open branches in other countries (Sangeetha, 2015) while in East Africa, particularly in Tanzania, the situation is different. Despite the harmonization of trade and creation of business opportunities, most HLIs in Tanzania have seen slow, if not negative growth. Worse still, research interests have ignored to examine as to why most HLIs in Tanzania have failed to tap the created opportunities (CBE, 2014; EAC, 2010). The factors that limit Tanzania from tapping the opportunities created by EAC are not yet known; hence, there is need for an investigation into this problem. The need for such an investigation is evident from the literature review that is focused in addressing the problem at hand. This study is therefore geared to examine the factors that affect the HLIs' capacity to tap the emerged opportunities for growth and sustainability.

The main objective of this paper is to evaluate the capacity of CBE as one of HLIs operating in Tanzania, in tapping the market opportunities under EAC market; specifically the paper tries to identify strengths and weaknesses of CBE in tapping business opportunities in the EAC market.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

In Schumpeter's view, opportunities emerge as a process of "creative destruction". Entrepreneurs do not discover opportunities rather they create them by taking advantage of technological changes on innovation occurring in the economy. Entrepreneurial opportunities arise in the economy as an outcome of "a self transformation process; the driving element of which is an innovating entrepreneur-hero" (Schumpeter, 1934). In Tanzania, this theory means that many firms can improve their businesses by taking advantages of technological change on innovation occurring as a result of EAC market formation.

Another theory, Kirzner's Resource Based Theory (1979; 1997), is concerned with the understanding of how certain individuals secure profits on the basis of knowledge and information gaps that arise among people in the market. It suggests that the organization should use the available resources to get the competitive advantage. These resources include assets and capabilities owned by the firm that need to be combined and exploited and hence make the firm perform better than rival companies. The RBV theory to Tanzanian situation implies that having adequate resources is one of the strengths that can make organizations achieve a competitive edge in the market and gain economic growth.

Competitive Logics

Universities and other higher learning institutions do compete with one another in many ways. Competitive logics underpin international activities that seek to gain access to new markets. In an increasingly globalized world, it is important to build an image that can demonstrate relevance of teaching, learning and connecting to international markets (Edelstein & Douglas, 2013).

Market Access and Regional Integration Logics

Marketing theories and concepts, which have been effective in business, are gradually now being applied by many universities with the purpose of gaining competitive advantage. The higher education sub sector has two main features that influence the marketing ideas that can be applied to it. First; higher education, in most countries, is a non-profit sector; therefore, marketing concepts which are applied to the sector do not function as those which are found in the business sector, where the

primary goal is profit making. Second, higher education is a service; therefore all peculiarities applicable to the marketing of services apply to higher education.

Recently, Yale School of Management adopted an international strategy of creating a network of partner business schools in countries with rapid economic growth and new business investments (Edelstein & Douglas 2013). This strategy provided opportunities for the institution to engage with their international counterparts to create professional networks that provided learning and research experiences as well as potential business opportunities in the future. Due to linkages between the global economy and the emergent economies such as Brazil, Russia, India and China, numerous universities in Europe and North America are targeting these countries as high priority locations for Development Programs (Edelstein& Douglas 2013). This implies that in Tanzania, CBE in particular can adopt the same strategy by networking with other institutions in the EAC member states to develop market opportunities.

Expansion Logics

It is important to note that partnerships with other universities can be forged across borders as a way of expanding or entering into new higher education markets for creating a more global campus. The focus in this case is to form strategic alliances with other Universities overseas. Universities can also export their degrees to overseas countries by entering into franchising agreements. However, a university may be confident in its own capabilities and opt to develop its own offshore campuses (Nejatian *et al.*, 2011). Universities are seeking to become more global as they realize opportunities across their own borders. University expansion is also now inevitable by delivering courses online due to the current popularity in taking online courses and the popularity of usage of internet worldwide. Distance learning is now a profitable venture for universities through an increase of non-local students' enrolment (Nejatian *et al.*, 2011). This implies that Tanzania and CBE in particular, can also enter into partnership with other HLIs among the EAC member states to expand its market.

Leadership Logics

One important element that determines a company's success at innovation is its leader. Leadership can be defined as a process of influencing others towards achieving a goal. A good leader should be aware of the main characteristics of an organization and simultaneously know how to improve them

(Nejatian *et al.*, 2011). This implies that the success of HLIs in tapping into the emerging opportunities in the EAC market will depend on leadership skills of those who head the institutions.

Creativity Logics

Innovation is defined as the ability to be creative or generate ideas and focus on increasing profits and competitive positions in an organizational context. Innovative power is one of the top corporate strategies for future success of a company and creativity is the core of innovative power. Creativity is not only a core aspect in developing successful business systems, but it is also essential for companies aiming at attaining sustainable development, where problems usually cannot be solved by simple application (Nejatian *et al.*, 2011). Creativity logics in this study imply that HLIs need to be creative therefore they should come up with new ideas relating to business expansion in the EAC market.

The Best Practices from other Countries

In the United Kingdom, internationalization of higher education has shown to provide to students both intellectual and cultural benefits that can help in their future employment. For example, Manchester University established an online distance learning programmes in different countries including health systems whereby students have been able to improve their understanding of the different context of public health issues (Gemmell *et al.*, 2014).

East Asia has significant students' mobility in the region driven by geographic and cultural proximity; increasingly, large numbers of students from Japan, South Korea and Taiwan are attending universities in China and vice versa. Australian universities are among the most active in establishing partnerships and satellite operations in the region (Edelstein & Douglas, 2013). In Tanzania, this implies that HLIs including CBE can also adopt these best practices from developed countries by conducting online distance learning programmes in EAC member states.

According to Sangeetha (2015) in India, a large chunk of young population is a high potential market for several international universities and institutes. However, Indian education institutions are not just satisfied with the domestic market. Many of them are increasingly venturing out and opening their branches in other countries, these institutions include: Manipal University, Amity University, Birla Institute of Technology and Science, SP Jain Institute of Management and Technology and Xavier

Labour Relations Institute. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is the most prospective market for most of these institutions. Many Indian universities have opened branch campuses in the Middle East chiefly because of the large Indian expat population in these areas. There are also Tax benefits like the availability of Free trade zones allocated for the purpose of higher education. Due to many challenges facing the higher education sector in India, universities have decided to look for overseas opportunities to hedge their revenues.

Manipal University that already has campuses in the Caribbean Islands, Dubai and Malaysia offering Medical, Engineering and Business Management courses increased its revenues due to increased number of customers. Opening campuses in other countries also makes students obtain the exposure of doing the same course in a different country (Sangeetha, 2015). In this context, CBE can open new campuses within the EAC member states and offer different courses that meet customer's requirements.

Institutions that Have Tapped the EAC Market

The growth in trade was complemented by a significant growth in cross-border investment in the service sector cutting across banking, insurance and tertiary education. For example, East African Breweries from Kenya acquired 51% shares in Tanzania's Serengeti Breweries; Trans Century of Kenya has substantial investment in Tanzania Cables and Tanzania's TANELEC, while BIDCO has significant investments in the edible oil sector in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania.

On the other hand, Tanzanian food processing companies such as AZAM have made some inroads into Ugandan and Rwandan markets, CRDB bank has opened a branch in Rwanda and Vodacom has expanded its services to Rwanda.

On the part of higher learning institutions, Kampala International University (KIU) from Uganda has already opened a campus in Tanzania hence intensifying competition in higher learning institutions in Tanzania. Although KIU has taken initiative by penetrating into Tanzanian market, little has been undertaken by Tanzanian higher learning institutions to counteract the move. It is noted that other business sectors in Tanzania have already tapped the EAC market opportunities as indicated in Table 1 that shows institutions in other sectors that have crossed borders in the EAC market. Now, what

makes HLIs in Tanzania to lag behind in tapping the emerging EAC market opportunities? The answer is not fully analysed hence research studies are needed to address the issue.

Table 1: Intra-EAC Trade

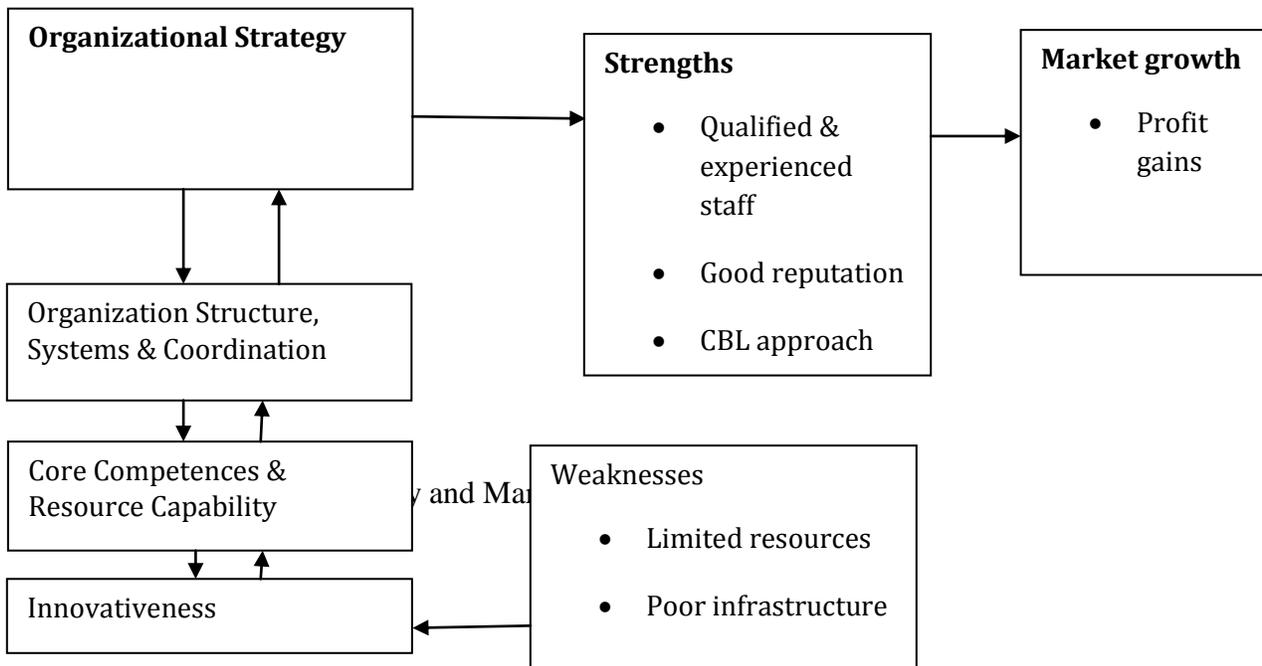
Figure 1: Total Intra-EAC Trade, 2005-2010 (US\$ million) Total EAC Trade											
Country/Year	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Uganda	696.2	583.2	805.9	948.0	945.7	1,005.1	- 113.0	222.7	142.1	-2.3	59.4
Tanzania	289.4	292.1	279.7	520.3	574.3	735.2	2.7	-12.4	240.6	54.0	160.9
Kenya	1,035.9	819.9	1,144.1	1,395.4	1,331.9	1,534.0	- 216.0	324.2	251.3	-63.5	202.1
Rwanda	134.0	176.4	247.1	440.4	456.6	.....	42.4	70.7	193.3	16.2	.....
Burundi	63.1	66.4	84.8	90.7	.....	.....	3.3	18.4	5.9	.....	.....
Total Exports											
Uganda	144.7	152.8	274.8	377.4	398.8	428.6	8.1	122.0	102.6	21.4	29.8
Tanzania	289.4	117.7	173.1	315.5	263.0	450.0	- 171.7	55.4	142.4	-52.5	187.0
Kenya	974.6	735.8	952.5	1,213.5	1,169.5	1,278.8	- 238.8	216.7	261.0	-44.0	109.3
Rwanda	34.9	33.0	40.0	46.2	93.2	.....	-1.9	7.0	6.2	47.0	.....
Burundi	4.0	5.5	5.3	6.0	.....	.....	1.5	-0.2	0.7	.....	.....
Total Imports											
Uganda	551.5	430.4	531.1	570.6	546.9	576.5	- 121.1	100.7	39.5	-23.7	29.6
Tanzania	160.5	174.4	106.6	204.8	310.5	285.2	13.9	-67.8	98.2	105.7	-25.
Kenya	61.3	84.1	191.6	182.0	162.5	255.2	22.8	107.5	-9.6	-19.5	92.7
Rwanda	99.1	143.4	207.1	394.2	363.5	.....	44.3	63.7	187.1	-30.7	.....
Burundi	59.1	60.9	79.5	84.7	.....	.....	1.8	18.6	5.2	.....	.....

Source: Partner State Bureaus of Statistics (2010).

The Conceptual Framework

The variables in the conceptual framework are organizational strategy, strengths, weaknesses and market growth. The conceptual framework shows that an organization can have either strengths or weaknesses whereby strengths are advantageous attributes that lead to a positive outcome in a business while weaknesses are disadvantageous attributes that lead to a negative outcome in a business. The model suggests that the available weaknesses can be turned into strengths and add value to an organization. The model indicates further that by utilizing the available strengths, an organization will finally attain market growth in the business. The model implies that if an organization has a good strategy and possesses resources, then such an organization will have the strength to achieve market growth.

Figure 2: Conceptual Model



METHODOLOGY

This paper is research based which employed case study design that combined quantitative and qualitative methods. While qualitative data were collected through In-depth Interviews (IDIs), quantitative data were collected through survey. Interview Guides were the main research tool that guided qualitative data collection process whereby a broad range of information relating to capacity of HLIs in tapping opportunities in the EAC was collected. Information was collected from 6 students and 6 lecturers of the College of Business Education (CBE).

Quantitative data which mainly consisted of respondents' opinions on the capacity of HLIs in tapping opportunities in EAC were collected through structured questionnaires.

Purposive sampling was used to select the academic staff members involved in the IDI so as to maximize range of responses. Long working experience of more than 10 years in higher learning industry and gender mix were the main selection criteria. A total of 32, i.e. 16 members of staff and 16 students participated in the quantitative study were *randomly* selected.

In processing the information and data collected, themes were developed from the transcripts, and then followed by coding of the themes was done to like pieces of responses prior to grounding them into findings. The findings generated were presented in terms of descriptions of the real situation pertinent the capacity of HLIs in tapping opportunities in the EAC. The syntheses of the findings lead into production of conclusions and respective recommendations. Secondary data were obtained from documentary review of CBE documents.

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

A total of 32 respondents, that is, CBE staff and students were interviewed. The frequency of occurrence for listed variables in respect of key strengths of CBE in Table 2 indicates that long experience and marketable courses ranked the highest, each scoring 15.6% both good location and college reputation scored 12.5%, good facilities, local campus expansion and government support scored 3.1% each, low fee, good curriculum and good motivation each scored 9.3% while high quality education and competent staff scored 6.2%.

Table 2: Respondent’s Opinion on Strengths held by CBE

Variable	No. of Respondents	Agree	Percentage
Long experience	32	5	15.6
Good location	32	4	12.5
Good reputation	32	4	12.5
Good facilities	32	1	3.1
Demanded courses	32	5	15.6
Good curriculum and CBL learning	32	3	9.3
Local campus expansion	32	1	3.1
Government support	32	1	3.1
High quality education	32	2	6.2
Good motivation and committed staff	32	3	9.3
Competent academic staff	32	2	6.2
Low fee	32	3	9.3

Source: Field Survey (2014)

On the part of factors limiting HLIs, data in Table 3 demonstrates insufficient infrastructures ranking the highest by 34.4% followed by insufficient staff with a score of 18.8%, insufficient resources 12.5%, insufficient customer care and unreliable timetable each scored 9.4%, poor communication system, limited support from the government, few courses, insufficient library services, and delays in issuing transcripts and insufficient quality control each scoring 6.2%. Low practice of computers, delays in implementing plans, insufficient research, publication, consultancy and bureaucracy each

scored 3.1%. A similar study conducted in Taiwan by Huang *et al* (2009) on strategic marketing of educational institutions concluded that resources are the source of firm's competitive advantage.

Table 3: Respondents' Perception on Factors Limiting HLIs in Tapping Opportunities

Variable	Total No. of respondents	Agree	Percentage
Insufficient infrastructure (classes, offices and hostels)	32	11	34.4
Insufficient customer care	32	3	9.4
Insufficient staff	32	6	18.8
Insufficient practice of computers	32	1	3.1
Poor communication system	32	2	6.2
Insufficient resources (facilities and funds)	32	4	12.5
Delays in implementing plans	32	1	3.1
Limited support from government	32	2	6.2
Few courses for undergraduates and absence of Masters programmes	32	2	6.2
Insufficient research, publication and consultancy	32	1	3.1
Insufficient library services	32	2	6.2
bureaucracy	32	1	3.1
Unreliable timetables	32	3	9.4
Unfavourable location (noisy areas)	32	1	3.1
Delays in issuing transcripts and certificates	32	2	6.2
Insufficient quality control	32	2	6.2

Source: Field Survey (2014)

Literature has revealed that there are market opportunities existing in the EAC but the question is why most of the HLIs in Tanzania are still confined within their local market instead of crossing their borders and tap the opportunities? When compared with HLIs in developed countries, the situation is quite the opposite. Foreign universities have taken regional expansion programmes positively and have benefited a lot from such programmes.

The findings of the study showed that CBE possesses strengths such as long experience in the provision of business education, marketable courses, strategic location and established reputation. Despite long experience and provision of marketable courses in business studies, the College has not taken initiative to open branches across the border. This is especially true since the College is in operation since 1965, having trained and produced high ranking cadres who have pursued studies in accountancy, procurement and supplies, marketing, business administration and ICT. CBE is the only college in East Africa that offers legal metrology.

Location and College reputation were also observed as strengths, this is because College is situated in the centre of Dar es Salaam, Mwanza, Mbeya, and Dodoma . The locations were selected strategically and have attracted customers due to their convenience and accessibility as opposed to other institutions which are located in the remote areas. CBE can use a similar approach by obtaining premises at strategic areas in other countries and enjoy the economies of scale; this will enable the CBE to expand and penetrate the EAC market and thus growing its image.

On the part of weaknesses, three factors were observed to be critical namely; poor infrastructure, insufficient staff and insufficient resources. According to Resource Based Theory, company resources can make a firm get a competitive advantage; from this theory, shortage of resources at CBE will lead to failure in doing business. Currently, shortage of doctorate lecturers and professors, lecture theatres and ICT facilities are some of the limiting factors in attracting students from other countries. Therefore, efforts in increasing these resources are needed. As Edelstein & Douglas (2013) observe, and rightly so, that Manchester University established online distance learning programmes in different countries due to skills and technological capabilities they have in information technology.

As for the infrastructure, it is true that if an organization is operating using poor infrastructure, it would certainly not do better than would have otherwise been the case. For example, shortage of classrooms, lecture halls and student hostels pose a problem to students because they (students) may be forced to miss lectures, become overcrowded in class and live in unsecured private hostels thus causing fear and uncertainty to them. In order to run business smoothly, CBE should make efforts in making major improvement in terms of infrastructure.

The findings are supported by the secondary data that were obtained from documentary review of CBE report (2014) on strengthening students' enrolment. The report pointed out insufficient accommodation to students as a contributing factor causing a decline of customers.

On insufficient staff, it was observed that the number of academic staff does not meet the requirements of the expanding College. This implies that the more the College expands business the more qualified staff will be needed.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

The paper establishes that due to increased population there are market opportunities in the higher education sector of EAC that need to be tapped by HLIs including CBE. Therefore, HLIs in Tanzania including CBE have to take proactive steps to tap the opportunities so as to increase their market and thus achieving sustainability in their business.

It has been observed further that HLIs in East Africa have strengths that can make them expand their business in the EAC market and tap the opportunities. These institutions need to learn from other universities elsewhere that have benefited from opening campuses in different countries.

On the part of the identified weaknesses, it was observed that CBE, like any other HLI in East Africa has some weaknesses that need to be addressed before entering the larger EAC market. Due to an increasing competition in the local market, it is high time now that these institutions strive to eliminate their weaknesses and establish strategies for tapping opportunities in the EAC market and hence achieve market growth.

Recommendations

On strengths, HLIs in Tanzania, including CBE are recommended to deploy their resources including classrooms, lecture halls, students' hostels, funds, adequate ICT facilities and qualified staff as these will enable them enter and compete in the EAC market.

On the part of weaknesses, it is recommended that HLIs in Tanzania including CBE should eliminate their weaknesses and develop good strategies thus forming strengths that will make them achieve market growth.

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