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# **Study Conditions at a Private University in Tanzania: A Perspective On Students' Experiences**

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## **Introduction**

Education is widely recognized as a major driving force of social and economic development (Teferra and Altbach 2004; World Bank 2000; UNESCO 1995 2005). However, the access to educational opportunities is quite limited in many countries of the developing world. This is particularly so in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). According to the World Bank Development Indicators only two thirds of the SSA population is able to read and write. A particular problem is higher education. The number of students in SSA increased from 0.8 to 3 million between 1985 and 2002 (Kapur and Crowley 2008, 77) and to 4 million in 2005 (World Bank 2009, xxvii); because of the demographic bulge, it is expected to triple again till 2020 which would mean 12 million students. Also the enrolment rate of the corresponding age group increased considerably, from 2.6% in 1991 to about 5% in 2005 (World Bank 2009, 46). Nevertheless, SSA lags behind other regions of the world. Worldwide the gross enrolment rate in higher education is 26%; in the OECD countries it is 72%. Even in comparable poor countries and world regions, it is significantly higher: In India 13%, in China 23%, in Latin America & the Caribbean countries 35% (see also World Bank 2000; UNESCO 2005; Bloom, Canning and Chan 2006; Arnove and Torres 2007).

Higher education has received less attention in the international development community and also among African politicians, compared to primary and secondary education. However, also higher education has many benefits, both for individuals by enhancing their job and income opportunities and for societies fostering economic growth and promotes the development of civil and democratic societies (UNESCO 1995; World Bank 2000; Bloom, Canning and Chan 2006). Thus, the SSA higher education system constitutes a particular problem. Low quality education at this level is certainly one of the reasons why this region has not been able to catch-up with world-wide economic growth in the second half of the 20th century.

Education is also one of the main instruments to reduce excess fertility (Lutz and Samir 2011) – one of the main reasons for SSA's relapse in terms of GNP/head, compared to all other world regions. Today, education in general is perceived as a major vehicle for socio-economic change by African politicians and governments and they are committed to advance the educational systems. This is expressed by a rather high percentage (4–6%) of the gross national product spent for education. However, if the gross national product is small, this results only in small absolute amounts of money (Samoff and Bidemi 2007). Therefore, also foreign aid plays an important role in African education in general and in higher education in particular. For instance, not less than a fourth of the income of Tanzania's largest and oldest public university, Dar es Salaam, is coming from donor grants (Mkude, Cooksey and Levey 2003, 31). Foreign donor organizations are the principal providers for funding of university research (World Bank 2009 , 57-58).

In the last decades the number of newly established universities in Africa has grown rapidly. Because of the limited capacity of public institutions to deal with increasing numbers of students, private institutions

have emerged to supply the market. This is a trend which can be observed throughout the world (Altbach 1999). Particularly in the case of SSA, governments were not able to develop the school systems in a sufficient way; therefore, the dominant recommendation in the 1990s of international agencies was to expand private schooling (Samoff 2007, 66). Between 1990 and 2005, the number of public universities has increased in 12 Sub-Saharan African countries, investigated by Ng'ethe, Subotzky and Afeti (2008, xix), from 113 to 188, but that of private universities from 14 to 107. However, the massive expansion of tertiary education has led in many cases to a deteriorating educational quality: Public expenditure per student decreased, the ratio of academic staff to students has fallen, producing over-crowded classrooms and overload for teachers (World Bank 2009, xxvii).

Thus, further “unfettered expansion” (Ibidem, xxviii) is no solution, improvements in the quality of tertiary education are now most urgent (UNESCO 1995). As far as private universities are concerned, critical debates on their academic quality have arisen (Ishengoma 2007; Banya 2001; Ng'ethe, Subotzky and Afeti 2008). To assess the quality and achievements of an educational system is a difficult task. A “medical metaphor” which is based only on the diagnosis of deficits and output assessments at one point in time by an external team is not enough. This is so because in developing countries schools have many objects, besides of transmitting knowledge and granting diplomas. They should foster a critical orientation, reduce elitism and discrimination, procure citizenship values, a sense of national unity, and develop a sense of social competence, self-reliance and self-confidence among the pupils (Samoff 2007, 66; Lutz 2009).

In this sense, the present paper aims to investigate the situation of the students in a private university, the St. Augustine University of Tanzania (SAUT). We have carried out a study which provides insights into students' perceptions about their conditions of studying and living. This focus is in line with the recommendations of the World Declaration on Higher Education for the 21st Century which states: "National and institutional decision makers should place students and their needs at the center of their concerns, and should consider them as major partners and responsible stakeholders in the renewal of higher education." (Art. 10/c; see UNESCO 1998a)

### **University Education in Tanzania – A Short Outline**

The first Tanzanian university, the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM), was founded as an autonomous institution in 1970; it had existed already since 1960 as an affiliate College of the University of London. In 1962, it was constituted - together with the universities of Nairobi and Makerere – as the East African University (Mkude, Cooksey and Levey 2003; Ng'ethe, Su-botzky and Afeti 2008).

After Tanganyika had gained independence in 1961, Julius Nyerere, its first charismatic president and a teacher himself, emphasized the important role of education in the socio-economic development of the country (Mushi 2009). At that time only about 15% of the population was literate. Thus, the main intent of educational policy at this time was to reduce illiteracy. In this regard, it was a big success: Till 1986, the proportion of the literate population increased to 90% (Mushi 2009, 135). The number of university students was minimal in 1970; just 0.2% of the corresponding age group or 2,027 students were enrolled in a higher education institution. Until 2007 the gross enrolment rate has increased slightly up to 1.5%, but because

of the huge population growth the number of students has jumped up to 55,134<sup>1</sup>.

The aim of Nyerere's socialist government was not only to increase enrolment figures, but also to eliminate inequalities in the provision of education based on gender, religion and ethnicity. Nyerere criticized the Tanzanian education system as oriented to "Western" interest and norms, and as elitist, catering to the interests of the small proportion of those who manage to enter the hierarchical pyramid of schooling, as alienating pupils and students from the society for which they should be trained, and as equating education with formal schooling and the ability to pass examinations (Kassam 1978). Therefore, in 1967 the educational system was nationalized and centralized; private higher educational institutions were not accredited before 1997 (Mushi 2009).

In the UNESCO-Report of 2005 (90), Tanzania is classified as a country where the private sector in higher education is "negligible or non-existent". However, since then the situation has changed; several laws and official guidelines, enacted in 1992 and 1999, have admitted private schools from the primary up to the tertiary level (Mushi 2009, 193). According to the Tanzania Commission for Universities (TCU) 2009/2010 20 private universities and university colleges were registered besides of 11 public institutions; in total 117,057 students were enrolled 84,717 in public, 32,340 in private universities and university colleges. These figures reflect a general pattern in African higher education: Although private universities outnumber public universities, much more students are enrolled in public institutions (Teferra and Altbach 2004, 33) With 6,672 students, St. Augustine

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<sup>1</sup> World Bank Indicators

University of Tanzania was by far the largest of the 20 private universities listed in this statistic.

This huge expansion in just 13 years has also led to critical voices. For instance, Johnson M. Ishengoma (2007) recognized that more than 80% of the private universities and university colleges have a religious background. This raises suspicion that various religious groups may be in competition against each other and try to enlarge their influence in society. Nevertheless, the private universities provide an opportunity for those young people who do not get admission to the public universities. Considering the extremely low gross enrolment rate (1.5%) in Tanzania, (6% in SSA as a whole), all efforts for providing higher education should gain merits.

In this paper the focus will be on the situation of the students, because they are that group which is directly affected by the conditions in the newly established institutions. We will investigate their personal circumstances and their evaluation of a newly established private university. The importance of more knowledge about students in developing countries has been pointed out by Devesh Kapur and Megan Crowley (2008, 4): “The role of higher education, in both theoretical and political terms lacks adequate empirical knowledge of what is happening within universities and to the students who spend a considerable part of their prime years in these institutions.” Vavrus (2005) investigated how the lives of secondary students in the Kilimanjaro region of Tanzania are affected by adjustment policies adopted after recommendations of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank; she makes a convincing case for the importance of understanding the local setting in the development of international and national educational policy. The World Bank Report on Higher Education in Developing Countries (2000, 24) notes several problems of students and we

will confirm most of them in our study: Overcrowded classes, inadequate library and laboratory facilities, distracting living conditions and few student services.

### **Study Design, Research Objectives and Hypotheses**

In the winter terms 2009/2010 and 2011/12 the authors of this paper were teaching in the sociology bachelor and master program of St. Augustine University of Tanzania (SAUT), a university established by the Roman Catholic bishops of Tanzania in 1998/1999. It is situated in the north of Tanzania, near Mwanza. Mwanza is a city with around 300,000 inhabitants, however, hardly comparable in its infrastructure with a city of similar size in West Europe. The university campus occupies a large area, descending slightly toward Lake Victoria, and embraces about 90 buildings, interspersed by green lawn places and trees. The university has of five faculties: Business Administration, Social Sciences and Communications, Law, Education and Engineering. In the academic year 2009/2010, about 9.000 students were enrolled at SAUT. The vision is to have 15,000 students in 2014. Until November 2008, 2,657 students have graduated from SAUT (Walters, UD.). During our first stay at SAUT, we conducted a survey among students. Survey findings have been complemented by personal experiences of the authors and by extensive conversations with the executive administration, with lecturers, guest professors and students at SAUT.

The objective of this study was to investigate the perception of the students about their conditions of studying at SAUT and living at the campus (in the student's hostels) or in Mwanza. For this aim, we developed a two pages long questionnaire with 24 questions. We carried out a pretest with 27 respondents and adapted the questionnaire. We used systematic sampling to



cover all faculties of SAUT; about 500 students of all grades filled out the self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire was distributed in classes at the beginning or at the end of lectures. It was explained that the survey had mainly scientific aims and that answers were only analyzed statistically. Since one of the investigators was present, questions could be answered directly. It was our impression that the students found the survey interesting, took it seriously and that the results, therefore, can be seen as valid and reliable. We were able to cover students enrolled in all major SAUT programs in a statistical satisfactory way (see Table 1). Three aspects of the situation of the students will be investigated: Their social origin and personal characteristics; their present socio-economic situation and their evaluation of the conditions of study. The main research objectives were the following.

The social origin and personal characteristics of the students: Inequality of access to education is a basic problem of education systems in the developing world. This problem is particularly acute at the tertiary level: In Sub-Saharan African on average, students from the lowest socio-economic quintile have 15 times less chances of entering a university than those from the top quintile; in some countries, the relations are even worse (World Bank 2009, 71). Serious problems of discrimination in terms of educational opportunities exist already at the primary and secondary level: No enrolment of many children and youth people at all (e.g. disabled children), unequal participation of children from rural and remote areas, of girls etc. (Mushi 2009, 208-9; see also World Bank 2000, 2002; Farrell 2007; Morley, Leach and Lugg 2009). These problems will be acute even more at the tertiary level. Such a situation contradicts internationally agreed-upon principles as they have been stated, for instance in The World Conference on Higher Education (UNESCO 1998a, Art. 3a); (see also Amonoo-Neizer 1998; Kapur

and Crowley 2008). A particular important problem here is equality of opportunity by gender (Morley 2010). In SSA, women were not admitted to universities before 1945; in the 1970s, there were still only about 100 women in tertiary education (UNESCO 1998b, 57). Around 1990, enrolment ratios of men in most SSA countries were between 2% and 5%, for women between 0.3 and 1% (Ibid, 71). Out of these facts and considerations we expect that the student sample investigated in our study will show considerable inequalities in terms of gender, socio-economic and regional background in opportunities at the level of university education.

**Table 1: Numbers of Students <sup>2</sup> at SAUT and survey sample by faculties and year of study and percentage of female students (2009/10) Year of study**

Faculty	1	2	3	Total	% Female
All students					
Business Administration	811	468	368	1647	39
Social Sciences and Communications	1235	592	366	2193	54
Education	2074	1435	636	4145	35
Law	374	366	141	881	35
Engineering	15	-	-	15	27
Postgraduate MA-Studies	136	99	-	235	25
Total	4645	2960	1537	9142	38
% Female students	42	39	36		
Survey sample					
Business Administration	56	7	0	63	47
Social Sciences and Communications	0	61	71	132	56
Education	67	22	37	126	26
Law	8	67	2	77	39
Engineering	7	-	-	7	14
Postgraduate Studies	90*	-	-	90	17
Total	138	157	110	495 <sup>3</sup>	37
% Female students	40	41	44		

<sup>2</sup> In the survey there was made no differentiation between first and second year postgraduate students.

<sup>3</sup> The total number of respondents given here is less than the total number of realized interviews (501), because of missing responses in the variables faculty or year of study. Source of students: SAUT administration

## **The Present Socio-Economic Situation of the Students:**

It can certainly be expected from university students that they are satisfied with somewhat more modest living conditions than, say, a coeval working young man or woman. At the same time, however, very difficult life circumstances of students – such as an inadequate housing situation, lack of money for basic needs of life, food and clothing, long separation from the family because of high distance and bad travel facilities – are a social injustice per se and may also inhibit a successful course of the studies. The socio-economic, personal circumstances of living and studying for tertiary students in Africa may have become worse in recent times for two reasons. On the one side because of the demographic explosion which has implied that incomes declined and living conditions for many families became worse, despite a considerable economic growth. On the other side because the construction of physical infrastructures (e.g. student hostels) could not keep up with the rapid expansion of tertiary education and because, particularly in private universities, often considerable tuition fees are requested. A study conducted at several South African higher education institutions revealed that students with financial hardships are forced to constrain their consumption of basic goods such as food or toiletries and study-related expenses; often they “stop out” and leave university in order to earn some money to refinance their further studies (Breier 2010). Out of these considerations we expect to find serious difficulties and problems among our students concerning their life conditions.

The evaluation of the conditions of study and the quality of teaching: As mentioned in the first section, the strong expansion of tertiary education has led to declining teacher-student ratios and overcrowded classes,

particularly in the lower grades (BA-studies). For the academic staff, it has led to an overload with teaching, less time for research and a weak scientific output (World Bank 2009, 55). All this has negative repercussions on the quality of instruction (Shamim et al. 2007). Also the construction and provision of physical and technical infrastructure (lecture rooms, libraries, computing facilities) may often be inadequate. Such conditions of study can have a significant negative impact on academic success. As far as the evaluations of the students are concerned, two contradictory hypotheses can be advanced. On the one side, they might feel that they are particularly privileged to be able to go to a university and, therefore, be quite satisfied. On the other side, the modest circumstances will reduce the satisfaction with the conditions of study.

### **The Socio-Economic Background of the Students**

Although equality in educational opportunities is desired worldwide, the reality – even in the rich countries of the North – reflects educational inequality (Farrell 2007). Also in the Third World, schooling often matters more than learning; the education system is central to maintaining a particular social order and to legitimize inequality and social stratification (Samoff 2007, 62). This might be especially the case in Tanzania, where the gross enrolment rate in higher education is not more than 1.5% (Morley and Lussier 2009; Morley, Leach and Lugg 2009). The aim of widening participation in higher education is expressed explicitly by the Tanzania Association of Private Universities (TAPU 2009): It states as its dream that all qualified students should gain access to a university education. From this point of view, there should be no restrictions in the access to university education except talent and diligence; full equality of chances should exist in

terms of gender, social and regional origin and religious or ethnic membership. As a Catholic institution SAUT acts on the motto “building the city of God”. Thus, one should assume a strong commitment of the institution towards the elimination of inequalities in access and university life. One author wrote in this regard: “... the key question is whether Catholic schooling will strengthen its alliance with and service to the poor and oppressed, or instead be-come increasingly incorporated to serve the interests of a globalized and an expanded Catholic middle class for whom academic success is the main purpose of schooling.” (Grace 2003, 48). How do these matters look like in the case of SAUT? To examine the opportunity structures in access, we describe successively the composition of the students at SAUT in terms of regional origin, gender, social origin and religious background.

**Regional Background:** SAUT has made an important contribution to the aim of promoting equality of educational chances in terms of regional origin already by establishing the university in a town and region where formerly no university existed. Moreover, SAUT has established ten constituent colleges and university centers all over the country, some in very remote areas. Given the fact, that the majority of private higher education institutions in SSA are established in the major capital cities (Teferra and Altbach 2004, 33), SAUT plays an outstanding role in providing university access to geographically disadvantaged regions and advances their development. However, one could argue also that this fast expansion is part of Catholic proselytization in a country, where competition between various religious communities is growing in recent years.

At SAUT, 25% of the students are coming from the town of Mwanza, 73% from other parts of Tanzania, 2% from other countries. This finding indicates that SAUT does not attract students mainly from its region but from all over the country. This high regional mobility of the students corresponds to a specific nation-building strategy implemented by Julius Nyerere: For reasons of enlarging the knowledge of the country and for weakening ethnic ties as well as facilitating cultural exchange between young adults with different religious and ethnic backgrounds, students were sent to educational institutions in distant parts of the country (Vilby 2007, 76).

**Gender Equality:** Our data show that about two-thirds (63%) of the students are male and one-third female (37%). This is a remarkable high proportion of women by comparison to previous trends, although not yet as high as in many European and North American universities. It shows that the access of women to higher education is making fast progress also in Sub-Saharan Africa. However, a study on participation of female students in Tanzania and Ghana found that this is mainly limited to women from higher socioeconomic groups. Female students are often also disadvantaged in terms of work load because of their socially prescribed domestic responsibilities (Morley, Leach & Lugg 2009). A study on Uganda found that they are also disadvantaged in terms of age-appropriate enrolment (Wells 2009). Furthermore, the rise of female enrolment rates does not lead to a corresponding increasing of female university staff (Amonoo-Neizer 1998).

**Table 2: Education of fathers and mothers of SAUT students, compared with the Tanzanian<sup>4</sup>**

Educational level	Population as a whole (in %)		Fathers of students		Mothers of students		All Tanzanian	
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All	men	women
1. No complete education	12	8	11	10	9	15	28	34
2. Primary education completed	31	15	25	38	23	33	49	50
Sum 1+2	43	23	36	48	32	48	77	84
3. Middle school	15	9	13	14	11	13	--	--
4. Secondary school or higher	42	68	51	29	58	40	23	16
Total	100	100	17	91	101	101	100	100
(n)	(483)	(458)	(483) <sup>5</sup>	(289)	(169)	(458)	(2,527)	(10,139)

**Equality in Terms of Social Origin:** Concerning the social origins of SAUT students we can see two facts: First, students come to a very high proportion from families where father and mother have a rather high education. 31% of the fathers and 17% of the mothers of male students have college or university education; among female students, these proportions are even higher, 56% and 41%, which corresponds with the above mentioned findings from (Morley, Leach and Lugg 2009). Thus, students from higher-educated social strata are strongly over-represented. In this regard, we can compare our data with those from the large Tanzanian Demographic and

<sup>4</sup> Source: Tanzania Demographic and Health Survey 2010; age 15-49

<sup>55</sup> The absolute row sums are less than the total number of respondents because cases with missing values in the variables under consideration are omitted.

Health Survey of 2010, which covered a representative sample of 10,300 households and 12,666 people.

The findings are rather unequivocal. Table 2 shows that less than half of the students' fathers and mothers have only primary or no completed education, but around 80% of all Tanzanians aged 15 to 49. On the other side, we see that half of our students' fathers and 40% of mothers have a higher education (secondary or more), but only 26% of all Tanzanian men and 11% of Tanzanian women. Thus, the chances of children of parents with a higher education are much higher to go to university as those of children of parents with no such education. This fact seems to be reflected somewhat also in the attitudes and behavior of the students. One student made a proposal concerning the improvement of the transport facilities between the city of Mwanza and the SAUT campus near Malimbe, a small village a few kilometers outside. The proposal was to establish a special bus service for students so that they would not be constrained to merge with common people in the bus.

**Religious Affiliation:** SAUT has been established and is led by the Catholic Church, but its principle is to be open to all students, irrespective of their religious backgrounds. Our data show that 54% of the students are Roman Catholic, 29% Protestant, 9% Muslim and 8% members of other denominations. Thus, Catholic students are in fact attracted more than students from other religious backgrounds. In teaching and research, the Catholic leadership of the university has no impact, as the administrators and other teachers assured and our own observations confirmed. The provision of a mosque for Muslim students and the permission for other religious communities to celebrate worship in lecture rooms affirms the proclaimed religious tolerance and openness of SAUT. Nevertheless, an obligatory



course on social ethics for all under-graduate students provides evidence for the university's goal to contribute to a holistic development of students in a moral sense.

### **The Socio-Economic Situation of the Students**

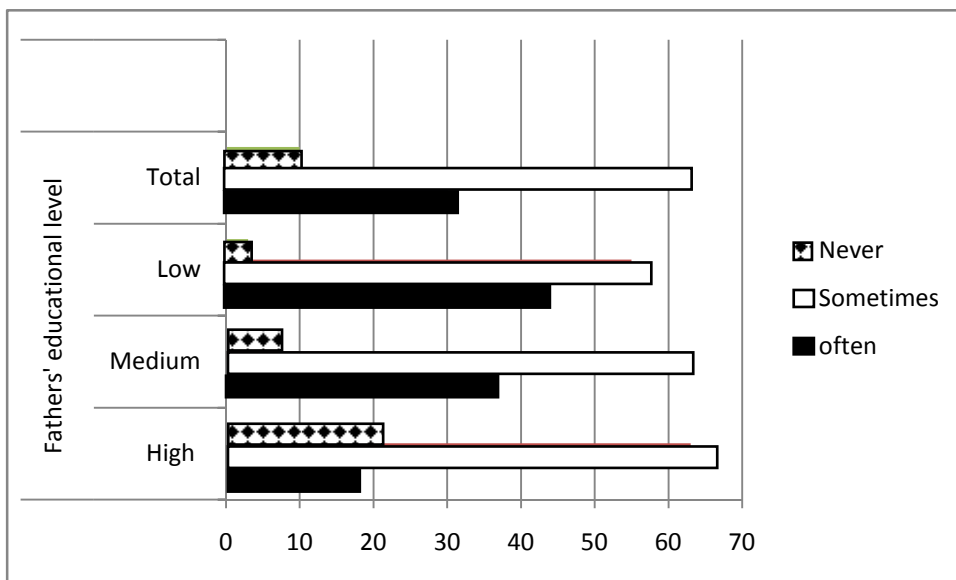
A university education requires sufficient financial resources which could be a problem, especially for students with a low socio-economic family background. In spite of the provision of scholarship aid by SAUT and loans by the government, many gifted youth in Sub-Saharan Africa cannot afford studying. It is important to point out that even though a Tanzanian loan system for poor students was established in 2004; in reality needy students often do not get financial support<sup>2</sup>. Table 3 shows how the students cover their expenses for the university and for living. More than one-third of all students get the largest part of their expenses from their parents; half of them get at least some financial support by them. 47% of the students get a loan that covers either almost all expenses or at least a part. Working besides studying is exhausting and because of time restrictions hardly realizable. Nevertheless, this is the way how 13% of the students have to finance their studies; a further 9% rely on their own earnings to cover a part of their expenses. Just a small proportion of students (11%) is in the lucky position to have money from their own sources such as receipts from a small shop or savings.

**Table 3: Coverage of expenses for the university fees and the living**

How do you cover your expenses for the university and your living?		The largest part	A part	Nothing	Total
Support from parents/relatives	%	37	13	51	101
Grant	%	7	6	87	100
Loan	%	33	14	53	100
Working to earn money myself	%	13	9	79	101
Money from my own source	%	4	7	89	101

The sources for the coverage of expenses vary significantly between the BA and MA students. More than half of the MA students finance their studies by working or receiving money from their own sources, which is true for only 7% of the BA students. MA students more often get a grant, but more seldom a loan provided by the government, and parents and relatives are more seldom able to cover the costs for a master study. In respect to the economic situation, the personal perception of the students plays an important role. The vast majority of students (90%) report financial problems: 30% claim that they have often problems to get the money needed for their basic living costs; additional 60% more face this difficult situation at least sometimes.

**Figure 1: Financial problems to cover basic living costs by father's educational level (%)**



In this regard, we can observe an obvious and statistically significant disadvantage of students from lower socio-economic classes. They more often face serious financial problems, which forces them to earn money instead of fully concentrating on their studies. In the worst case, students are denied examinations at the end of the semester due to their failure to pay the tuition fees. Affected students do not only experience material poverty but maybe also a painful social shame (Morley and Lussier 2009, 81). Tuition fees of around 640 US-\$ (BA) and 1,200 US-\$ (MA) per semester are high amounts of money in a country where annual GDP per capita is 1,208 US-\$ and 30% of the population live in poverty (UNDP 2009, 171–173). Given this high tuition fees some argue that private higher education institutions are only serving the elites (Quddus and Rashid 2000, 506). Since Tanzania adopted a strategy of cost sharing between the government and the

university's service users (Teferra and Altbach 2004, 26), every Tanzanian university charges tuition fees. The fees for public universities are similar to those charged at SAUT.

### **Evaluation of the Conditions for Studying and Living at the University**

The quality of private universities varies enormously in global perspective. Some private US-universities (e.g. Harvard) belong to the top universities of the world and even some private universities in East Asia have attained high standards by international comparison (Altbach 1999). The newly established private universities in Sub-Saharan Africa are in a much more disadvantaged situation. A main problem they are facing is the issue of the quality of teaching. Given small budgets and high costs in the starting years for building up the entire infrastructure, it might be particularly difficult for them to attain a high quality level. In addition, qualified staff is rare in Sub-Saharan Africa and therefore private and public universities compete for teachers (Banya 2001). Ishengoma (2007) found that in the academic year 2005/2006 out of 499 academic staff employed in all Tanzanian private universities, only 17% were holders of a PhD, 50% had a master's degree and 16% had only a bachelor's degree. The low proportion of highly qualified staff combined with difficult working conditions also contributes to a weak research activity and publication outcome. Furthermore, insecurity of tenure has a negative impact on the quality of teaching (Ishengoma 2007).

However, the quality of education in private universities cannot be generalized and characterized as generally inferior to public education (Varghese 2004, 20) Higher education institutions always produce private and public goods regardless of their owner. (Marginson 2007). These include

private goods such as superior social status or high income as well as public goods such as knowledge and human resources, which are crucial for the economic development of a country. Furthermore, there exist interdependencies between public and private universities in terms of teaching staff; many part-time lecturers of private universities are drawn from public universities.

How do the students themselves evaluate the conditions of studying at such a private university? The evaluation of several conditions of studying is shown in Table 4. The items are arranged in a rank order, going from the conditions evaluated best to those evaluated worst. We can see that the students overall evaluate the conditions of study at SAUT rather positive: In six out of the seven items a clear majority says that the conditions are good or very good. On top is the quality of lectures, followed by equal treatment of men and women, the quality of the library, the availability of teachers for personal consulting and the size of classes. The personal experiences of the authors, however, suggest that SAUT students must have quite moderate expectations in some of these aspects. We were surprised, for instance, to see some very large classes without adequate equipment to cope with them (e.g. loudspeakers). Also the equipment of the library both in terms of books and facilities for making photocopies was quite modest or even unsatisfactory (in the latter regard).

**Table 4: The evaluation of the conditions of studying at SAUT**

How do you evaluate the following conditions at SAUT?		1 (Very good)	2 (Good)	(1+2)	3 (Moderate)	4 (Bad, very bad)	(3+4)	Total
Quality of lectures	%	34	48	(82)	15	2	(17)	99
Equal treatment of male and female students	%	38	38	(76)	19	5	(24)	100
Library	%	34	38	(72)	25	2	(27)	99
Personal consulting by Teachers	%	25	42	(67)	27	7	(35)	102
Size of classes	%	24	37	(61)	30	9	(39)	100
Freedom of expression	%	25	32	(57)	28	15	(43)	100
Computers/ Internet access	%	7	21	(28)	38	33	(71)	99

There is only one condition which is evaluated clearly more negative than positive, namely the availability of computers and internet access. This negative evaluation can be fully supported by the authors of this paper who also had great difficulties in getting adequate access to such facilities when teaching in Mwanza in 2009 and 2011/12. Given about 9.000 students, the availability of computers – all in all may be two or three dozen – is really very unsatisfactory. However, we can say that in general student's perceptions about the conditions of studying do not correspond to the negative judgment of the critics on low quality of private universities. However, the rather positive evaluations of the students concerning the size of classes and the personal consulting by teachers appeared somewhat surprising from the viewpoint of our own experiences. Most lecturers do not have an office room at the campus and, thus, cannot be approached easily by the students and also most of the classes in the BA programs have very large

sizes (250–700 students). The students have to participate in many written and much bureaucratized mass examinations. There might exist two reasons for these positive evaluations. First Tanzanian students might have no imaginations about really good circumstances regarding the student-lecturer relation. On contrary they will often have been used to unmotivated teachers in the public primary and secondary school system; there, teachers are even sometimes absent from school to generate an additional income because of their low governmental salaries (Mushi 2009). In a qualitative interview one student reported about a high and satisfactory quality of the lectures and he gave as the reason that the lecturers always come to the classes. Thus, fulfillment of the lectureship responsibilities is not self-evident. A second reason for the relatively high satisfaction of students, however, might be their general positive evaluation of university education and learning. Studying is still quite a privilege in a poor country like Tanzania.

The evaluation of the studying conditions is also dependent on the year of study. First, most of the MA-courses take place in the new, excellent lecture building of SAUT in Malimbe with small lecture rooms, equipped with the most modern technology. The BA-courses, on the contrary, usually take place in the older, often very large lecture halls. In addition, first-year students will have less objective possibilities to compare conditions at SAUT with those at other universities.

**Table 5: Evaluation of studying conditions by program and year of study (%“very good”)**

Degree program Year of study	Bachelor			Master
	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>
Library	45	28	40	17**
Computer/ Internet access	10	9	7	4*
Quality of lectures	35	33	42	28
Size of classes	20	23	19	36**
Personal consulting by teachers	22	23	31	23
Equal treatment of male and female student	42	32	42	37*
Freedom of expression	42	22	15	20**

Statistical significance of Chi-Square: \*  $\leq 0.05$ , \*\*  $\leq 0.01$

Table 5 shows the evaluation of the conditions of study by students' year of study. In four aspects a statistical significant association turns out: Students in the MA-courses are much less satisfied with the conditions in the library, and somewhat less satisfied with computer and inter-net facilities; they are more satisfied, however, with the size of the classes. The lower satisfaction with the library, which is very pronounced, is probably caused by the fact they need highly specialized books which are not available. The positive evaluation clearly reflects the fact that in the MA-courses size of classes is relatively small (between 3 and 50 students).

The item “freedom of expression” is related to the fact whether students have the opportunity to say freely what they think regardless of any religious, political or other ideological conventions. This is especially important in African countries where the democratic right to express oneself freely without fears of censorship or punishment is not self-evident (Teferra



and Altbach 2004, 40). However, also in Africa, freedom of expression is perceived as a crucial condition for independent thinking and a necessary requirement for doing research (Amonoo-Neizer 1998). First year students feel much more often that there is the possibility of free expression at SAUT. This perception declines with the year of studying, but increases again slightly in the MA-programs. In this regard, the difference between the first and the second year students is very pronounced. This could be explained by a disillusion process: Most students enter university with high expectations about developing their creative skills and end up with some disappointment concerning the real conditions (Kimani 2005).

The general living conditions seem to have an impact on the satisfaction with the conditions of studying, but also on performance and success. In general, the satisfaction with living conditions is much lower than that with conditions of study. Of the seven aspects in this regard were covered by our questionnaire only two were evaluated positively by a weak majority of the respondents (see Table 6): The transport from the city of Mwanza to the campus of SAUT in Malimbe and the security on the campus. In all four other aspects – supply of water and electricity, catering and health services and housing – more than half of the students are only moderately or not at all satisfied. That this critical evaluation is justified can be fully confirmed by the authors. Nearly every day electricity and water supply fall out for some hours or even for several days. The negative effects on working and studying are evident. Certainly, most of these services are not provided directly by SAUT so one cannot blame it for these problems. However, investing money for buying a reliable power generator would make the work of the university staff and of the students much easier.

**Table 6: The Evaluation of the Conditions of Living at the Malimbe Campus and in Mwanza**

How do you evaluate the following conditions		1 Very good	2 Good	(1+2)	3 Mode rate	4 Bad, very bad	(3+4)	Total
Transport to and from SAUT	%	15	35	(55)	33	18	(51)	101
Security on the campus	%	17	36	(53)	34	12	(46)	99
Electricity supply	%	7	32	(39)	39	22	(61)	100
Water supply	%	10	31	(41)	39	21	(60)	101
Catering	%	7	31	(38)	45	16	(61)	99
Health services	%	8	30	(38)	44	18	(62)	100
Housing	%	8	24	(32)	42	25	(67)	99

### Summary and Conclusions

The starting points of our study were two facts: First, it is well known that educations in general and tertiary education in particular are essential instruments for and economic growth and socio-economic development in less developed countries. Second, statistical figures show that tertiary educations has grown strongly in Sub-Saharan Africa in recent years, but the quality of teaching and research may not have been able to catch up with this growth. There is no dearth of declarations and recommendations about the necessity of investments in higher education, the securing of equality of opportunity etc. by institutions such as UNESCO, the World Bank and others. However, what is lacking are concrete empirical studies about the situation of learning in tertiary educational institutions in SSA. The present study has done this by making a survey on 500 students of St. Augustine

University of Tanzania (SAUT), the largest private university in Tanzania. Four aspects were at the centre of this study: The social background of the students, their present socio-economic situation, and the evaluation of the living and study conditions by the students and their prospects for the future. The results can be summarized as follows.

Findings related to the composition of the students in terms of social status of the parents, regional origin, gender and religious affiliation have shown a very high inequality in terms of social background; students from higher social strata are probably much more over-represented in SSA-universities than in those of more developed societies. The situation seems better in terms of regional origin and gender; already one third of the students are females. However, when gender intersects with socio-economic status, a clear disadvantage of female students from lower social strata is detected; this corresponds with findings from Morley and Lussier (2009). In terms of religion, Catholic students are clearly over-represented but our research did not indicate a bias of teaching in this regard. The socio-economic situation of students seems rather harsh, certainly much more difficult than that of students in richer countries. Given the financial limitations, the evaluation of the conditions for studying and living at the university appeared as rather positive. It was only the equipment with computer facilities which was strongly criticized; in all other aspects (quality of lectures, availability of teachers, library etc.) the evaluations were rather positive. However, our conclusion was that the positive evaluation of the conditions of study was due also to rather modest expectations of the students.

We think that a series of policy implications can be deduced from these findings. The first concerns the particular institution which we have

investigated. Considering the fact that SAUT is a quite young institution and suffers like most universities in the developing world from limited resources, it was already successful in providing higher education in a very poor country and a remote region. Because of the low gross enrolment rate, an increase of opportunities for higher education is of utmost importance for Sub-Saharan countries like Tanzania. In this regard, the establishment and development of SAUT can be considered as a success. SAUT might be less successful in the fight against the reproduction of social inequalities. SAUT also needs to fund itself by means of student tuition fees. At least SAUT does not differ remarkable in the amount of tuition fees from public universities. The question “whether widening participation in higher education is a force for democratization or differentiation” (Morley et al. 2009, 57) must be answered in favor of the latter alternative. As long as higher education is extremely short in supply, like in SSA, there will be harsh competition for it, whereby students with a privileged socio-economic background will always be advantaged. Already the starting conditions for entering tertiary education are unequally distributed. Morley et al. (2009, 62) found out that the attended secondary school determines to a large extent the probability of university access. Thus, the access to higher education in Tanzania still is not based on meritocratic selection.

The success of SAUT in terms of the provision of higher education is indicated by the rather positive evaluation of most study conditions by the students. However, from the perspective of foreign teachers accustomed to much better conditions, the evaluation is somewhat more critical. We had to struggle with several problems while preparing and giving lectures. In fact the students are facing similar problems; in the case of computer and internet access and in the case of most items concerning the living conditions they

gave rather negative evaluations. A private university has no a direct possibility to improve by itself alone items such as supply of water and electricity. However, it could do something, for instance, invest in a power generator and improve computer and internet access. Information technology is crucial for a modern high-quality education and research. For instance, it is impossible to teach social science data analysis, with-out having a reliable technology and computer program packages (such as SPSS).

The focus of this paper was on the situation of students. Student's evaluations are one instrument for assessing the quality of teaching in universities. Such evaluations should be con-ducted regularly in higher education institutions. They could also increase the motivation and engagement of the lecturers. The evaluation of students certainly should be supplemented by evaluations of university experts and foreign teachers.

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