

Systemic Legislation a Stimulation for Meaningful Inclusion of Work-Integrated Learning in Higher Education Curricula in Uganda

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Abstract:

Background: There has been increasing enthusiasm to include work integrated learning in higher education owing to the benefit that accrue for the undertaking by the students, higher education institutions and the participating workplaces and the requirement by the regulatory framework of its integration in the curriculum. This has been done in Uganda in the absence of a comprehensive systemic legislation to regulate the undertaking but rather mere practice and incidental policies. This study therefore set out to find out the consequence of the current systemic legislation being applied in the management of work integrated learning, the role played by the systemic legislation in the implementation of work integrated learning and if there is need to institute a systemic legislation. The study aimed at accentuating the need for a comprehensive systemic legislation for stimulation of meaningful inclusion of work integrated learning in higher education curricula.

Materials and Methods: The study employed a triangulation mixed methods where quantitative data was collected using approved questionnaires from 342 of the sample size of 378 students, academic and workplace staff. The qualitative was collected through in-depth interviews from 16 of the targeted 25 purposively selected respondents. Both data was analysed simultaneously and merged for interpretation.

Results: The results from the study indicated that the current systemic legislations were incidental and fragmented to meet the specific need of meaningful work integrated learning. The findings also showed systemic legislation play a central role in empowering, providing support, settings standards, protecting the would be disadvantaged and legitimatising the undertaking. The findings also showed that there was clear support for the need for a comprehensive systemic legislation.

Conclusion(s): The study concluded that the current systemic legislations were inadequate, inappropriate for application on work integrated learning. The role played by a systemic legislation was critical the realise the benefits of work integrated learning. The institution of a comprehensive systemic legislation was imminent to be able to improve the government involvement and mitigate the current limitation of the undertaking.

Key words: Work-integrated learning, Systemic Legislations, Higher Education, higher education institutions

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I. Introduction

The growing inclusion of work-integrated learning in higher education curricula in East Africa is now a trend after being ignored for so long [1] unlike in the western world according to [2]. The role that higher education plays in human capital development was well described by [3] as unique in solving the skills shortage through production of qualified graduates and postgraduates. The regulation of higher education is therefore not surprising as one way of ensuring that the national strategic objectives are achieved in a manner that is reliable, predictable and relevant not only to the citizens but also to the economic development of the country. Higher education in Uganda is regulated through different legislations that have spanned over a long time.

As [4] opined that the systemic legislation direction of higher education and indeed work-integrated learning is shaped by the extent of government involvement; the free market or corporatist. Through such debates the Canadian system which identifies with the free market has been under increasing pressure for state-driven strategies to be able to tap into the benefits of work-integrated learning [5]. In order to achieve inclusivity and equitable quality education [6] prescribed the improvement in the number of youth and adults with skills that are well inculcated for decent work. Not surprising, sustainability of the relationship between the students, higher education, industry and the community for successful work-integrated learning in higher education [7] have further been fostered but the legislation framework within which they can be achieved has been ignored. The absence of or unclear systemic legislation framework for work-integrated learning is not unique to Uganda

but many developed and developing economies according to [8]. The assumption that work-integrated learning can be generalised has been refuted and proved as non-applicable therefore requiring contextualisation in different jurisdictions according to [9].

The absence of legislation for work-integrated learning has been described similarly as a power that remains as will without power by [10] and as one of the contradictions and complexities in the education system by [11]. Subsequently, what [12] discovered as best practice for work-integrated learning in the training hospitality in South Africa may not be sustainable elsewhere without an apprehending systemic legislation. At the same time [13], while comparing work-integrated learning of South Africa with the practice in other countries noted variation addressed by legislations and some by mere practice. This far, work-integrated learning in Uganda is being embraced within lack of systemic legislation or a legislation vacuum. In developing countries where most of the hosting workplaces are small, medium enterprises as observed [14] the need for legislation turn out to be imminent. The higher education institutions, the participating hosting workplaces or organisations have therefore been implementing work-integrated learning within their own context and pretext. The systemic legislation framework in Uganda is obscure about work-integrated learning as offered by higher education institutions. The incidental regulation of work-integrated learning from the education related legislation in Uganda with less known about their effect desires that more is studied to establish their impact on work-integrated learning.

This study set out to answer the following research questions;

What are the current systemic legislations that affect work-integrated learning inclusion in higher education in Uganda? What role(s) does a systemic legislation play in the inclusion of work-integrated learning in Higher education? Is the comprehensive systemic legislation necessary? Therefore, the study highlighted the contribution of the current legislation framework with the aim of accentuating the need for a comprehensive systemic legislation for stimulation of meaningful inclusion of work-integrated learning in higher education curricula in Uganda.

1.2 History of Higher Education in Uganda

In Uganda, the development of higher education is inseparable from the country's political history that spans from the pre-colonial, colonial and the post-colonial era. The education policy framework from the colonial period when higher education was introduced has been shaped by the political environment. The western education in Uganda came along with the missionaries in the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century the colonial government took up the responsibility through legislations for financing, curriculum development and control. Makerere College established in 1922 was turned into the University College of London University in 1949 setting pace for higher education [15]. This was done through the education ordinance of 1927, the 1942 Education Ordinance, Makerere College Ordinance of 1938, Makerere College Act 1949 and Education Ordinance of 1959 [16]. The involvement of government is therefore historical, fundamental and not incidental.

After independence the University of East Africa (Makerere University College, University College of Nairobi & University College of Dar-es-salaam) was formed through its Act of 1962. However, in 1970 the University of East Africa was dissolved and Makerere University was promulgated through an Act of parliament. As the only university in Uganda then, it formed the backbone of the present legislation regarding higher education [16]. However not surprising, as [17] emphatically stressed the universities have maintained their inherited principles of structure, organisation and purpose as it were in the mediaval age and are therefore challenged by the emerging trends some of which can be work-integrated learning.

National Education Policy Commission of 1987 resulted into Government White Paper on Education Policy report of 1992 titled "Education for National Integration and Development" the recommendations of this report about higher education included; setting the objectives of higher education as teaching to produce high-level man power. It further recommended the establishment of the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) to regulate higher education [18].

1.3 Current Systemic Legislations Applied on Work-Integrated Learning in Uganda

The legislation of higher education in Uganda is spearheaded by the Universities and other Tertiary Institutions Act 2001. The other legislations like the Business Technical Vocational Education and Training Act 2008 and the Education Act 2008 are subsequently related.

The [19], purposed to establish National Council for Higher Education, its functions, administration and to streamline the establishment, administration and standards of universities and other institutions of higher education in Uganda. The focus of this Act towards work-integrated learning in higher education institutions is incidental to the object of widening accessibility of high quality standard institutions to students wishing to pursue higher education in addition to the functions of the council that include; co-operation with the relevant government departments, private sector to evaluate the overall national manpower requirement and recommend

solutions to the requirements, ensuring minimum standards for courses of study are adhered to and promotion national interests.

In pursuit of the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) mandate through Quality Assurance Framework the basic requirements for all the awards of higher education to include aspects work-integrated learning is recommended [20]. Indeed, ever since the enactment of this Act there has been increased regulation of higher education and establishment of several private and government universities. There has also been increased student enrolment in higher education and the inclusion of work-integrated learning in most academic programmes [21]. However, through several tracer studies the quality of graduates continues to be a challenge as many employers continue to show discontent of the students' ability to easily transit in the world of work [22], [23] and [24]. Apart from the recommendation for inclusion of work-integrated learning in the academic programmes offered by higher education institutions in Uganda less or no specific attention has been accorded to the details of implementation of work-integrated learning yet there could be having severe effects on the expected outcomes of this form of learning.

The [25] established the Directorate of Industrial Training (DIT) and Council to regulate non-formal and informal learning. Although there has been an improvement in creating recognition of non-formal and informal learning, work-integrated learning carried out by higher education institutions is not considered in this national legislation. The aim of promoting vocational education through informal strategies has been somewhat achieved through non-formal training schemes and the formation of Uganda Business Technical Examination Board (UBTEB) emanating from this Act to formally assess post primary vocational related programmes. However, much as the intention was to promote competence-based education the reality seems to be progression from one level to another and ultimately higher education institution further increasing the pressure. Therefore, the assessment seems to be an alternative to Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB) that examine primary and secondary level for progression to higher education therefore the employers' needs of producing ready graduates for work has not been adequately addressed.

The [26] is set out to regulate pre-primary, primary and post-primary education in Uganda. Since its enactment supported with universal primary and secondary education there has been significant enrolment of pupils at primary and secondary levels resulting into further increasing number of students at higher education [21].

Employment and work-related systemic legislations hardly provide for the inclusion or management of work-integrated learning offered to the students for higher education institutions apart from the employment regulation of 2011 that provides for the informal apprenticeship or traineeship [52], [53], [54] and [55].

1.4 Role of Systemic legislation on Work-Integrated Learning

The general function played by the systemic legislation on the establishing and implementation of work-integrated learning that cannot be underestimated have been highlighted by several scholars to include; powering, informing organisational policies, formalizing and legitimizing, offering protection, increasing political attention and strategic action, creating awareness, providing support to the stakeholders and setting the national standards for work-integrated learning practice. As underscored in the subsequently, without a clear systemic or national legislation for work-integrated learning the benefits of work-integrated learning may not be easily attainable.

1.4.1 Powering Work-integrated Learning and Informing Organisational Policies

Work-integrated learning power is a derivative of the benefits it offers to the stakeholders (students, higher education institutions and government) without the clear legislations that empower work-integrated learning the benefits may remain as wishful. As [10] declared work-integrated learning anticipated benefits are hopeless without adequate policies further describing work-integrated learning power as a will without power. Regarding systemic legislation informing the organisational policies he avowed that systemic legislations and organizational policy frameworks should be cognizant that organizational (institutional & workplace policies) clarity is compromised when systemic legislations are blurry. This assertion makes the systemic legislations central in making the foundation for the organisational policies to be formulated and implemented. In addition to identifying innovative models for work-integrated learning [27] observed that it ought to be treated as a national priority that universities have to undertake with the strategic direction well taken care of.

Subsequently [28] interestingly identified the skills that the universities need to emphasise like communication skills, problem-solving abilities, and analytical skills among the students in their curriculum development policies before commencement of work-integrated learning. However, the role, existence and the impact of the systemic legislation framework in shaping work-integrated learning is unexhausted. Therefore, the benefits stressed by [29] for the students, institutions, employers, communities, government and the economy can be unmatched and the activities involved in the organisation of work-integrated learning explored by [30] may be unguaranteed.

1.4.2 Legitimizing and Formalizing Work-integrated Learning

The implementation of work-integrated learning usually works through partnership between the workplaces, students and higher education institutions, how such relationships can be legitimised and formalised is critical. The realisation and need for legitimate partnership between higher education institutions and workplaces or employers for purposes of delivering sensible and meaningful work-integrated learning through a systemic legislation that support the integration of work and learning in higher education has been an ongoing debate according to [31].

As [32] observed, policy-makers in governments, higher education institutions and workplaces have to be implored to be cognizant of the complexities of work-integrated learning amidst many competing interests and be able to formalise this form of learning with the view of making it more legitimate and meaningful. And [33] further added that whereas work-integrated learning plays a critical role in transiting students to the world of work, some hosting workplaces underutilise the students without a legal remedy.

1.4.3 Offer Protection Mechanism

Work-integrated learning players or participates are vulnerable to among others; exploitation, abuse and harassment. The government intervention is therefore necessary as contended by [34] to offer protection of the disadvantaged students, higher education institutions or hosting workplaces against such incidences. The existence of possible discrimination was well articulated by [35] who identified inconsistency in work-integrated learning participation along race, institution, academic programmes among others in the USA. Without a clear systemic legislation on work-integrated learning the protection of the interests of the hosting workplaces, students and higher education institutions is unsolvable.

1.4.4 Increase Political Attention and Strategic Action

The development of a systemic or national legislation takes a vigorous exercise that involves many direct and indirect stakeholders. Such a process increases general awareness and political attention and strategic action according to [36]. The low levels of acceptability and awareness of work-integrated learning in many developing countries like Uganda may be originating from the lack of a clear legislation on work-integrated learning but little is known. The differences in the involvement and commitment of governments in the management of work-integrated learning as noted by [37] are glaring. Hence the need to undercore the role a systemic legislation through which governments can get involved in work-integrated learning.

1.4.5 Provide Support for Work-integrated learning

The fulfilment of work-integrated learning has been identified as a very costly activity on the students, higher education institutions and participating workplaces. As [36] competed that the national legal framework should be able to support and incentivise the linkage between higher education institutions and the workplaces. The purpose of which should be aimed at improving and providing for the development of work-integrated learning. Accordingly, [38] realised that the need by governments to support work-integrated learning at both higher education institutions and workplace levels is increasing becoming inevitable to be able to improve their competitiveness.

As [39] further emphasised, funding of higher education institutions and perhaps workplaces by government can be done through its agencies as one of the crucial aspects that can ease its implementation and monitoring. However, [2] and [34] contradicted that the creation of awareness was crucial as opposed to subsidies for training to hosting workplaces to be able to balance the priorities. The need to support the students, higher education institutions and the hosting workplaces by government whether through its agencies or directly can be one of the much-needed mechanisms in work-integrated learning implementation however, with less government involvement through legislation not much can be achieved.

1.4.6 Set the National Standard of Practice for Work-integrated learning

The harmonisation and coordination of the practices for work-integrated learning is one of the key aspects of its successful implementation. Correspondingly, [40] underpinned that the systemic legislations are needed for work-integrated learning to set the framework of structuring learning that is well beyond a given workplaces. The systemic legislation also plays a role of setting common understanding of work-integrated learning (Blom, 2014) [29]. Therefore [41] beseeched governments to put higher education institutions and workplaces under pressure to improve, strengthen and provide work-integrated learning. The systemic legislations on work-integrated learning according to [42], should be designed to detail how the co-operation between higher education institutions and workplaces should be organised. The assertion in the backdrop are implied by the national legislation on work-integrated learning draft of Rwanda as a reflection of the need for national regulation of work-integrated learning in higher education.

In addition to the dire need for improving the management, creation of sustainable financing and incentive mechanism and student insurance is quite clear according to [43] and [44]. Then [44] while studying the influence of prior work-integrated learning experiences as students of hosting workplace supervisors noted that where the supervisors had a meaningful work-integrated learning there was positive involvement hence the need for standards that can ensure quality learning for the students involved in work-integrated learning for possible replication. And [45] on the other hand cautioned that since knowledge in the workplaces during work-integrated learning can be described as stolen there is need for flexibility in the standardising the learning process.

II. Material and Methods

2.1 Study Design

While highlighting the diversity of research methodology used in studying work-integrated learning [46] proposed that using a multi methods ought to be adapted. They further noted that the use of mixed methods was prevalent and prudent. The use of mixed methods has also been promoted by [47] while studying its evolution in work-integrated learning research and studies. The study adopted the triangulation mixed research methods promoted by [48] where both qualitative and quantitative data were simultaneously collected, analysed, interpreted and results combined.

2.2 Study Location

The academic registrars, academic staff, work-integrated learning coordinators and students were selected from the following universities; Makerere University, Kyambogo university, Uganda Christian University and Uganda Martyrs University (central region), Gulu University (northern region), Busitema University (eastern region) and Mbarara University of Science and Technology (Western region). Work-integrated hosting workplace staff were located in different site within Uganda as referred by the university work-integrated coordinators. Officials of Employers' federation, workers' unions and ministry of education were located in Kampala (central region)

2.3 Study Duration

May 2019 to January 2020

2.4 Sample Size

378 respondents for quantitative data collection and 25 interviewees for qualitative data collection.

2.5 Sample Size Calculation

The sample size 378 was estimated form the target population of 25,000. We assumed the confidence interval of 5% and confidence level of 95%. As suggested by [49], [50] and [51] the saturation sample for such a phenomenological study for qualitative data collection is 25 falling within the recommended saturation of five to 25.

2.6 Subjects and Selection Method

The study population included the following; students, academic staff and coordinators of work-integrated learning who had undertaken their work-integrated learning from two randomly selected faculties or schools of the selected nine higher education institutions and workplace staff randomly selected from the list offered by each faculty or school. The interviewees for the study were selected purposively.

2.7 Procedure Methodology

The questionnaires were pre-tested and re-tested using the half-split method to ensure their reliability. The quantitative data were collected from the students, academic staff from the selected universities and the coordinators of work-integrated learning in the referred workplaces using the approved questionnaires for each category with similar items about the legislation of work-integrated learning in higher education institutions in Uganda. Deploying trained research assistants, self-administered questionnaires were distributed to 216 students in the nine universities and 205 (95%) were filled and returned, 108 were randomly distributed to the academic staff 97 (90%) were filled and returned and 54 questionnaires were purposively distributed to the referred placement coordinators in the workplaces and 40 (74%) were filled and returned.

Qualitative data from the work-integrated learning coordinators, academic registrars, officials of the employers', workers' federations of Uganda and Ministry of education officials were collected using face to face interviews from their different work locations guided by the approved open-ended interview guides. Twenty-five interviewees were targeted after being purposively selected and the researcher was able to interview only sixteen (64%). Their responses were recorded using a digital audio recorder with their signed consent. Prior to data collection, ethics approval was obtained from the research ethics review committee of

Mbarara University of Science and Technology (MUST) (04/05-19) and a research permit obtained from the Uganda National Council of Science and Technology (SS 5069).

2.8 Data Analysis

The collected quantitative data were analysed using the SPSS version 23 software, descriptive statistics in forms of percentages were generated for interpretation. The qualitative data gathered were transcribed and subjected to content analysis and later analysed for the emerging themes and schemes were generated.

III. Result

3.1 Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

This section presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents (students, staff in hosting workplaces in charge of work-integrated learning & academic staff from the selected higher education institutions). It includes their gender, age, qualifications and experience in work integrated learning.

3.1.1 Gender of the Respondents

Table 1: Gender of Respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	184	52.1	52.1	52.1
	Female	169	47.9	47.9	100
	Total	353	100	100	

As shown in Table 1, although the study attracted more males than females, the representation of the females was near half indicating a near gender balanced representation and implication the data collected was near gender unbiased.

3.1.2 Age of the Respondents

Table 2: Age Range of Respondents in Years

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Below 20 years	29	8.2	8.3	8.3
	20-30 years	243	68.8	69.2	77.5
	31-40 years	43	12.2	12.3	89.7
	41-50 years	26	7.4	7.4	97.2
	51 years and above	10	2.8	2.8	100
	Total	351	99.4	100	

As shown in Table 2, most of the respondents were of the age between 20 and 30 years. However, all the age ranges were represented for the equity of the study after collecting data from a wide range of the age groups.

3.1.3 Qualifications of the Respondents

The study selected students, academic and hosting workplace staff whose academic qualifications are subsequently shown.

3.1.3.1 Academic Qualification under which Students Undertook Work-Integrated Learning

Table 3: Academic Program Under which the Student Respondents Undertook work-integrated Learning

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	PhD	2	1	1	1
	Master degree	6	2.9	3	3.9
	Bachelor	157	76.2	77.3	81.3
	Diploma	26	12.6	12.8	94.1
	Certificate	12	5.8	5.9	100
	Total	203	98.5	100	

As shown in Table 3, the students that participated in the study majority had undertaken work-integrated learning during their undergraduate degree programmes. It is however critical to note that work-integrated learning was being embraced even at PhD, an indication of the increased and wide spectrum of the higher education inclusion of work-integrated learning in the curriculum from the lowest to the highest higher education qualification.

3.1.3.2 Academic Qualifications of the Academic Staff Respondents

Table 4: Academic Qualification of Academic Staff and Workplace staff

			Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Academic Staff	Valid	PhD	22	22.7	22.7
		Master degree	50	51.5	74.2
		Bachelor	22	22.7	96.9
		Diploma	3	3.1	100
		Total	97	100	
Workplace staff	Valid	Master degree	18	35.3	35.3
		Bachelor	24	47.1	82.4
		Diploma	8	15.7	98
		Certificate	1	2	100
		Total	51	100	

As indicated in Table 4, most of the staff that participated in the study were holders Masters degrees and undergraduate degrees for the academic and workplace staff respectively, an indication that the respondents possessed the qualifications that can equitably contextualise the requirements of the study.

3.1.4 Experience of Academic and Workplace Staff

Table 5: Experience of Academic and Workplace Staffs' in Work-integrated Learning

			Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Academic Staff	Valid	Less than one year	16	17.2	17.2
		1-2 years	19	20.4	37.6
		3-5 years	20	21.5	59.1
		5 years and above	38	40.9	100
		Total	93	100	
Workplace Staff	Valid	Less than one year	1	2	2
		1-2 years	9	17.6	19.6
		3-5 years	18	35.3	54.9
		5 years and above	23	45.1	100
		Total	51	100	

As indicated in Table 5, most the academic and workplace staff had participated in work-integrated learning activities for five years and above, and indication that the respondents had sufficient experience regarding the study.

3.2 Results of the Study

The results of the study have been presented according to the research questions regarding the current systemic legislations affecting work-integrated learning inclusion in higher education in Uganda, the role(s) played by a systemic legislation in the inclusion of work-integrated learning in Higher education and whether there is need for a comprehensive systemic legislation to regulate work integrated learning inclusion in higher education.

3.2.1 Current Systemic Legislations Applied on Work Integrated Learning

The legislation applied in the implementation of work integrated learning ranges from the education related to the world of work. As indicated in the following findings; One of the university administrators also indicated that;

“As a public university and we subscribe to all national policies under the guardianship of the National Council for Higher Education and the Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act. insurance frame works, labour laws, employment act” (QI-2)

In affirmation of the application of mainly *The University and Other Tertiary Institutions Act 2001 (UOTA)* in management of higher education another university administrator responded that;

“One of the guiding documents that we mainly use is the “universities and other Tertiary Institutions Act (UOTA)” that is one of the guiding documents that we have although we went ahead to develop other policies but in line with what the major one of UOTA. It is where the mandate for most of the universities come so most of the other policies that we have in place they must fall within the UOTA. Other education laws are not applicable.” (QI-4)

The programmes development guidelines of the national council for higher education one of the work-integrated learning coordinators highlighted that;

“As far as am concerned I don’t know any single legislation but the National Council for Higher Education programme development guidelines are the one available.” (QI-7)

The insufficiency of the programme development guidelines was however pointed out by one academic registrar that;

“Not quite, at least as I said those that are there those general guidelines for academic programme development or programme structuring, they don’t give very comprehensive details for work integrated learning. Therefore, they are insufficient.” (QI-10)

Another coordinator linked the challenges of work-integrated learning to the legislation gaps that;

“Yes, there is a link between the challenges of workplace learning and the policy gaps” (QI-17)

When clarifying the non-application of *the Business, Technical Vocational Education and Training Act 2008 (BTJET Act 2008)*, one of the ministry education and sports official pointed out that;

“... but what I can say is *BTJET Act 2008* provides for the informal and the non-formal assessment and learning in the world of work in Uganda but not the training in higher education institutions.” (QI-14)

Table 6: Current Systemic Legislations applied in the Regulation of Work Integrated Learning

		Frequen cy	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Employment Act 2006	47	27.6	27.6
	Employment Regulation 2011	24	14.1	41.8
	Occupational Health and Safety Act 2006	50	29.4	71.2
	All the above	47	27.6	98.8
	If none of the above; specify	2	1.2	100
	Total	170	100	

As indicated in Table 6, most of the respondents indicated that the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2006 is the most applied legislation on the students during work-integrated learning undertaking in the hosting workplaces. However, it is critical to note that the application of Employment Act 2006, Employment Regulation 2011. Correspondingly, some of the interviewees clarified that;

“The *Employment Regulation of 2011* provides for apprenticeship as a special form of workplace learning but does not cover the forms of work-integrated learning provided through high education institutions” (QI-1)

3.2.2 Role of Systemic Legislation on WIL

This study set out to establish the role played by the systemic legislation in the streamlining the implementation and management of the inclusion of work integrated learning in the higher education curricula. The results regarding powering work-integrated learning, informing organisational policies formalising and legitimising work-integrated learning and offering protection to the stakeholders. In addition, legislation increase of political attention and strategic action, creating awareness, providing support to the stakeholders and setting the national standards for work-integrated learning practice have been presented.

3.2.2.1 Powering Work-integrated Learning and Informing Organisational Policies

Table 7: Importance of systemic legislation for the implementation of work-integrated Learning

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very important	119	68.8	68.8
	Important	47	27.2	96
	Rather unimportant	7	4	100
	Total	173	100	

As shown in Table 7, majority of the respondents indicated that the systemic legislation was important for the effective implementation of work-integrated learning in higher education curricula.

Emphasizing the importance of the systemic legislation on of the ministry of education and sports officials pointed out that;

"It is because there is no regulation, such challenges are rising. In any case workplaces should offer training as one their corporate responsibility." (QI-11)

One of the coordinators of work integrated learning further highlighted that;

"When there is a clear legislation then the universities and the workplaces that wish to participate in the undertaking will have to conform to its dictates including formulating the required policies" (QI-16)

Regarding informing the institutional policies and implementation of work-integrated learning one of the interviewee highlighted its role in guiding the formulation of memorandum of understanding that;

"If the policies are meant to lead to having MoUs then it would be fine. This would mean that students would only have their workplace learning in organizations where an understanding has been put in place where the issues of finance, assessment, supervision and responsibilities of each player are well laid out." (QI-6)

The systemic legislation was also underscored as one that can be used to guide curriculum development by one key response that;

"So, when you're developing that curriculum, we make sure that we follow the set requirements like inclusion of work integrated learning."(QI-9)

3.2.2.2 Legitimising and Formalizing Work-integrated Learning

In order to make work integrated learning legitimate and legally bidding the workplaces to host the undertaking one of the coordinators emphasised the role of a systemic legislation that;

"Hosting facilities should be put to obligation to participate in the skills development of the national through a clear policy." (QI-8)

Another coordinator observed that legislation would regulate participating workplaces in that;

"I think that would be the best thing to do so that we don't have some organizations charging and then others not charging but if there is a policy then they would know what regulates them because the guideline requiring institutions to include workplace learning in the academic programmes is there but it doesn't regulate the employers who provide that training."(QI-3)

The systemic legislation would also assist in streamlining operations as one work integrated coordinator realized;

"Yes, it would help in giving guidance to avoid collisions by different higher education institutions and provide a streamlined process at a national level." (QI-12)

In the country where the private sector players are the main stakeholders in the work world an observant academic registrar hinted that systemic legislation would in such a way as;

"If you have national policy put in place to regulate the operations of the private sector then the training will be definitely streamlined in supporting development of skilled labour." (QI-13)

Concerning the regulation of the private sector stake in the inclusion of work integrated learning one academic registrar observed that;

"If you have national policy put in place to regulate the operations of the private sector then the training will be definitely streamlined in supporting development of skilled labour." (QI-6)

3.2.2.3 Offer Protection Mechanism

The weak stakeholders participating integrated learning need protection and such safeguards can be instituted by the instituting a systemic legislation. The possible exploitation of the students in undertaking work integrated learning through charging them training fees an official from the employers' federation suggested that the legislation would be helpful;

"I think that is wrong and I think it is driven on by desperation. Those are things that can be stopped through a legislation. Certain things need to be regulated that no student should be paying for workplace learning." (QI-5)

Regarding possible abuse or harassment of the students while undertaking work integrated learning one of the coordinators observed the deterring role the legislation would play that;

"if a policy came up and it sets standards and empowered students to make reports on issues of sexual or physical abuse it would mean that also the employees and the workplaces would be cautious" (QI-6)

Accordingly, one official of the directorate of industrial training in the ministry of education and sports anticipated that;

"Yeah there should be a regulation to provide checks and balances for the stakeholders." (QI-9)

3.2.2.4 Increase Political Attention and Strategic Action

The viability of work integrated learning has been highlighted as one of critical avenues of its promotion among which is having the governance system recognizing its role. The official of the workers' federation pointed out that;

"Traditionally internship was being managed under ministry of labour as a government department that would understand the needs the labour market rather than the ministry of education which is emphasizing acquisition of academic qualifications instead of the skills development. This will enable all forms of workplace learning strategies to be well attended to for skills development." (QI-1)

He further showed that when the political awareness is achieved agencies that would manage work integrated learning would be established;

"Right now we have realized these gaps internship or workplace learning offered by the higher education institutions as it cannot seamlessly transit the graduates into the work. Therefore, we are advocating for the introduction of SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY whereby one is not supposed to have full entry into full employment unless you undertake apprenticeship specified by the authority after completion of learning from the HEIs." (QI-1)

Strategically the systemic legislation would also provide ground for compulsory inclusion and undertaking of work integrated learning as highlighted by one of the respondents that;

"Students will have to do compulsory apprenticeship of about one year then from that point it will assume that the student have had sufficient hands on training before getting a full qualification." (QI-1)

The official from the ministry of education advanced the need for advocacy to promote work integrated learning when she observed that;

"These people need to be sensitized and there is need for awareness about the importance of this work place learning." (QI-4)

3.2.2.5 Provide Support for Work-integrated learning

The key stakeholder in the inclusion of work integrated learning need support to be able to equitably implement the strategy.

Table 8: Key Aspects expected in systemic legislation for work-integrated Learning

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Training	121	69.9	69.9
	Financing	13	7.5	77.5
	Insurance	19	11	88.4
	Payments of students	5	2.9	91.3
	All the above	14	8.1	99.4
	If none of the above, specify	1	0.6	100
	Total	173	100	

Most respondents as shown in Table 8, majority indicated that the systemic legislation of work-integrated learning ought to include that aspects of training at the same the other aspects like financing, insurance and payments of students when undertaking work-integrated learning were alluded to.

The need of support to the hosting workplaces in form of the incentive was highlighted by one of the academic registrars that;

"... responsibilities of the stakeholders, the incentives system." (QI-6)

Concerning the facilitation of the hosting workplaces one coordinator added that;

"Payment of Organisations that host workplace learning should also be addressed by policy." (QI-5)

Regarding some source of financing for work-integrated learning one of the ministry of education and sports pointed out that through the systemic legislation for the training levy that;

"... should be the industry to pay through are regulated training levy, they should be able to subscribe to pay some money in order to facilitate work integrated learning. So, higher education institution collaborates with the industry and see how they can place these students to facilitate learning but students should not directly pay to the industry because institutions are training for industries and so in order for these people to get quality labour services they should also participate." (QI-7)

The academic registrar of one of the universities highlighted that the systemic legislation would play a role of regulation in several aspects to support work integrated learning that;

"Of course, there are so many things; accessibility of establishment for workplace learning, financing, responsibilities of the stakeholders, incentives."(QI-4)

Regarding the financing of work integrated learning through a legislation a coordinator of work integrated learning in one of the prominent public university suggested that;

“Financing of workplace learning would also be detailed because it is a very expensive process for students, hosting Organisations and higher education institutions.” (QI-3)

As a need for insurance for students on the other hand during work integrated learning through the legislation another coordinator highlighted that;

“there is supposed to be some form of insurance but you know how insurance has been slow in getting rooted in our community.” (QI-8)

Other interviewees added;

“The students should be insured and the industry where there are going there should be some protective mechanism so for safety. For DIT those safety measures will incorporate them in our assessment and training packages.” (QI-10)

Another supplemented that;

“Yes, the ideal would be to have an insurance cover but who should pay for it. Yes, insurance would be very ideal for students undertaking workplace learning. I think it should be life because life would cover both and if not, workplace learning period insurance for that very period of time?” (QI-11)

3.2.2.6 Set the National Standard of Practice for Work-Integrated Learning

In terms of setting standards of practice for the many players in work integrated learning one of the coordinators of work integrated learning observed that;

“Setting minimum standards of practice for all the institutions through the systemic policy would be a good start of any regulation” (QI-15)

The employers’ federation official further observed that;

“The national legislation would set the minimum standards over and above the minimum standards higher education institutions can do other things.” QI-6)

Another added that;

“I believe it would be a good thing to have a general policy so that the operationalisation of our community engagement philosophy can easily be achieved”. (QI-2)

Another coordinator suggested that the systemic legislation would facilitate the accreditation of workplaces to provide credible work integrated learning that;

“This would mean that students would only have their workplace learning in organizations where an understanding has been put in place where the issues of finance, assessment, supervision and responsibilities of each player are well laid out.” (QI-5)

Yet another observed that a systemic legislation would provide for an improvement of work integrated learning that;

“If there is a national policy governing both the institutions and the employers I think we would go a long way to improve the work integrated learning.” (QI-7)

3.2.3 Necessity of a Comprehensive Legislation for Work Integrated Learning

In order to underscore the need for a comprehensive systemic legislation for work integrated learning the researchers sought to establish the influence of such a legislation, effect of lack of the such a legislation and whether it is even necessary.

In regard to the influence of a systemic legislation on the quality of work integrated learning the findings indicated that indeed effectiveness of work integrated learning is reliant on legislation framework.

Table 9: Influence of Systemic Legislation on Effectiveness of work integrated learning

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	69	40.6	40.6
	Agree	82	48.2	88.8
	Disagree	15	8.8	97.6
	Strongly disagree	4	2.4	100
	Total	170	100	

As indicated in Table 9, majority of the respondents showed that the systemic legislations influence the effectiveness of work-integrated learning.

Table 10: Whether lack of a Systemic Legislation Affect the Quality of work integrated learning

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	73	40.6	40.6
	Agree	80	44.4	85.0
	Disagree	19	10.6	95.6
	Strongly disagree	8	4.4	100.0
Total		180	100.0	

When the respondents were inquired whether the absence of a systemic legislation was affecting the quality of work-integrated learning majority agreed that indeed that lack of a comprehensive systemic legislation was affecting work-integrated learning inclusion in higher education curricula as shown in Table 10.

The results in the backdrop were re-enforced by the responses from the qualitative data. The outstanding ones include; one of the coordinators of work-integrated learning indicated that the was an absence of a national legislation that;

“I am not aware of any law or policy regarding work integrated learning at both university and national level. What we have are practices that we follow while executing the activities of workplace learning.” (QI-6)

The effect of the absence of the guiding legislation was spelt out by one of the interviewees the official from the employers’ federation that;

“At the moment we are in a state where workplace learning is regulated to only a minimal extent but we don’t have what we call guiding principles and guiding regulations and the outcomes cannot be predicted”. (QI-8)

Regarding the necessity of the systemic legislation for work-integrated learning, the respondents were profoundly clear.

Table 11: Necessity of the National Policy to Regulate Work-integrated Learning

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	169	93.9	93.9
	No	11	6.1	100
Total		180	100	

As shown in Table 11, almost the respondents indicated a systemic legislation regarding work-integrated learning majority was necessary.

IV. Discussion

4.1 Current Systemic Legislation Applied in the Work Integrated Learning

The findings of the study found that the current systemic legislations that are being applied on work integrated learning were illusive to the implementation of the strategy. Like what [11] avowed this creates complexity and contradiction to assume that the deficiencies of the learning in higher education institutions can be bridged through work integrated learning in the absence of a clear legislation that compels the participating hosting workplaces to offer meaningful learning spaces to the student. The findings further indicated that [19] led to the establishment of the National Council of Higher Education which provides for the inclusion of work integrated learning in the development of academic programmes as offered by higher education institutions according to [20] are insufficient in setting a systemic legislation to manage the learning strategy. The findings further provided that the other systemic legislations are far-fetched to even be applied to work integrated learning similar to what [25], [26], [52], [53], [54] & [55] missed. Similar to what [10] instigated the work integrated learning with its anticipated benefits still holds its will without any power, the practice cannot be at its best as suggested by [12] and affirmed by [13] assertion of it being a mere practice without a firm legislation to operationalise. Although the pressure that [5] highlighted may not be profound the results of the calibre of graduates self-telling concurring with [22], [23] & [24]. The inclusivity and equitable envisioned by [6] may still be eluded, sustainability as sought by [7] un achievable and the situation articulated by [8] of insufficient legislation in developing economies confirmed.

4.2 Role of the Systemic Legislation on Work Integrated Learning

Regarding powering and informing organisational policies for work integrated learning the findings assented with [10] that systemic legislation would further motivate institutions and workplaces to formulate policies that can be used to implement work integrated learning through providing clear basics. Similarly, the findings were in line with what [27] identified that the working models of work integrated learning should have

a systemic legislation backing as a national priority be able to realise and offer direction. Relatedly, the observations by [28], [19] and [30] that would be forfeited were confirmed.

As far as the legitimising and formalising work integrated learning, the findings affirmed that the systemic legislation provides a foundation to making the undertaking legit through formulation meaningful partnerships between the world of work and the higher education institutions therefore extinguishing the concerns raised by [31] regarding the ongoing debates of work integrated legislation. The realisation of the role of systemic legislation to make policy-makers to recognise the intricacies of work integrated learning as observed by [32] and [33] that need formalising for meaningfulness was also well-defined.

The provision of protection to the likely to be exploited, harassed or abused, the findings evidently indicated that a systemic legislation would play a significant role in curtailing such incidences and occurrences as detected by [34] and [35].

Akin to the assertions of [36], the findings indicated that many stakeholders would indeed be involved in the formulation of the systemic legislation hence providing the much looked-for political attention and cultivating a strategic direction like establishment of the centralised agency to manage the implementation of work integrated learning to higher education students and other forms of workplace learning in the country. The findings further prove that involvement of government would also be improved as suggested by [37].

The requirements in terms material, financial, incentives and motivational support for work integrated learning are enormous to all the stakeholders. The students need stipend, higher education institutions need to facilitate the staff to carry out the activities involved and the workplaces to provide for additional space, material and possible damages that may occur during the undertaking of work integrated learning. The findings also showed that inclusion of work integrated learning is a costly venture the requires support as advised by [36] and [39] and affirmed by [38] for government to work on the inevitable and improve their competitiveness. However contrary to what [2] and [34] had proposed that creation of awareness was more critical than the incentives in form of subsidies to the hosting workplaces the findings indicated that the need for financial support was eminent to even workplaces that participate in the undertaking.

The basic affirmation of a need to have minimum standard practices for work integrated learning as offered by higher education institutions was well sustained by the findings. The systemic legislation would not only set minimum standards but also the requirements for students' and workplaces' participation in the undertaking, set responsibilities of the stakeholders and improve the current incoherent inclusion. As set out by [40] and [29] basic structuring of learning for different professional options, detailed co-operation suggested by [42] strengthening of work integrated learning as proposed by [41], [43], [56] and [44] at the same time postulating flexibility of [45] were well supported.

4.3 Necessity for Comprehensive Legislation for Work Integrated Learning

As set out for this study the researchers intended to find out if a comprehensive systemic legislation was necessary, the findings indicated that the systemic legislation has a great influence on the effectiveness of work integrated learning to specify the direction of higher education as suggested by [4] and [8]. Similarly, as indicated in the findings the absence of the systemic legislation was indicated to affect the quality of work integrated learning as instigated by [10] and [11] and relatedly clearly exhibiting the systemic legislation was necessary and critical as articulated by [14] limit isolated context and pretexts which are being used in the inclusion of work integrated learning in higher education. Additionally, overcoming the sophisticated interplay that arises from the involvement majorly small, and medium enterprises that may also have other limitations as highlighted by [14].

V. Conclusion

The objective of the study was highlighting the contribution of the current legislation framework with the aim of accentuating the need for a comprehensive systemic legislation for the stimulation of meaningful inclusion of work integrated learning in higher education curricula in Uganda. Based on the findings the following conclusions were drawn;

The current systemic legislation that include education and world of work-related policies being used to regulate, manage and implement work integrated learning are distant, incidental, inadequate, un appropriate to the foster meaningful work integrated learning aspired by the higher education.

The role played by the systemic legislation in powering and informing organisational policies, legitimising and formalising and protecting those involved in work integrated learning in addition to increasing political attention, providing strategic action, setting acceptable and required standards of practice and sustainable reliable and credible support to the undertakings of work integrated learning is profoundly well-defined.

The necessity for a comprehensive systemic legislation to guide, regulate, harmonise and provide for equitable reliable funding, realisation and inclusion of meaningful participation of all the stakeholder to effectively benefit from and overcome the shortcomings of work integrated learning was unrefuted.

VI. Recommendations

The following recommendations that aimed stimulating meaningful inclusion of work integrated learning in higher education curricula in Uganda through a systemic legislation were drawn from this study:

1. The stakeholders especially the higher education institutions and workplaces should recognise that the current systemic legislation has not been adequately useful in the inclusion of work integrated learning.
2. The systemic legislation plays a critical role in the inclusion of work integrated learning in higher education the stakeholders should therefore lobby and advocate to such policies to be able to benefit in adequately equipping the students from relevant competences required by the working world.
3. The government of Uganda should with urgency formulate and institute a comprehensive systemic legislation to regulate, manage, fund and facilitate work integrated learning.

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