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UNIVERSITIES IN KENYA**

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ABSTRACT

Quality in higher education has been important for decades. In Kenya, quality in universities was embraced some years back by facilitating the vigorous vetting of programmes; matching the programmes with the existing capacity and competent sourcing of human resources to run the programmes. The study sought to determine the government contribution to quality teaching at universities in Kenya. The findings indicated a mismatch between resource allocation by the Government and growth in student population. The staff capacity constraints at universities continued to be felt. Teaching facilities were getting overstretched thus reducing quality as found in this research. E-learning as a model for knowledge dissemination at universities and is a clear driver that has facilitated greater outreach for university education in Kenya.

Key words: *Quality, Government, Facilities, Resource Allocation*

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INTRODUCTION

Recognition of quality in achieving customer satisfaction and competing in the global marketplace began in the late 1980s and into the 1990s. Quality refers to “fitness for purpose” meeting or conforming to generally accepted standards as defined by quality assurance bodies and appropriate academic and professional communities. In the diverse arena of higher education, fitness for purpose varies tremendously by field and program (Hayward, 2006).

Quality assurance is a planned and systematic review process of an institution or program to determine whether or not acceptable standards of education, scholarship, and infrastructure are being met, maintained and enhanced. A broad range of factors affect quality in tertiary institutions including their vision and goals, the talent and expertise of the teaching staff, the quality of the library and laboratories, access to the Internet, governance, leadership, relevance, value added, and a host of others. A tertiary institution is only as good as the quality of its teaching staff; they are the heart of the institution producing its graduates, its research products, and its service to the institution, community, and nation (Hayward, 2006).

For a country’s adaptability and economic and social development, indeed it’s standing in the international competition for power and influence is important. Many countries are currently undertaking an overhaul and revamping of their university system – often at considerable cost and at a daunting scale. The quality of higher education will determine the scientific discovery, innovation and exploration of the future. While the competition among institutions of higher learning remains a powerful driver of innovation and change within individual countries or among some select countries, this competition now occurs increasingly and quite publicly at the global scale, as a consequence of the increased globalization of academic concerns (Hayward, 2006).

National Governments had their own interests and priorities which were not always in accord with those of the universities. They included increased access, expectations of university contributions to the development of the nation, and in some cases, the desire to control political dissent which was often seen as originating from universities (Hayward, 2006).

The Government of Kenya has introduced free primary and free secondary education. The elimination of school fees, an obstacle to education for impoverished families in many African Countries, has, at a stroke, put the Country “on track” to reach the high enrolment and low parity objectives, at least in basic education.

University education in Kenya has expanded with a rise in student enrolments, expansion of universities, diversity of programmes and setting up of new universities and campuses. Enrolment in the public universities increased steadily to over 120,000 per year. It is evident that the Government is no longer able to cope with the ever increasing demand for more University places or even to provide the adequate resources required

Kenya also has a number of public middle level colleges that offer diplomas in certain fields including engineering, education, and computer science. Notwithstanding the expansion in the past several years, the capacity of the higher education sector in Kenya is still limited as a result of funding.

Statement of the Problem

Universities exist to fulfill certain mandates which include: training, research and innovation, technology transfer, maximizing the stakeholders’ interest, social responsibility, ethics, and market leadership. However, the achievement of this mandate has not been easier due to increased demand for university education in Kenya while the resources are still minimal. The Government, as the chief financier of university education in Kenya, has reduced its contribution to universities over the years, while at

the same time pushing the same institutions to admit more students. This has led to universities resorting to other income generating activities to subsidize Government sources, thus overstretching the internal resources that in turn affect quality (Chacha, 2004).

The Kenyan Government has established systems of external quality assurance (QA) to enable Government to gain greater control over higher education institutions in an international policy context which now sees higher education as critical for national competitiveness. This has been done through the Ministry of Education Science and the Commission for university Education. While the Government has been willing to accommodate the higher education sector's wish for more focus on quality improvement (QI) through broader evaluation of university effectiveness within the systems of external quality assurance (QA), there is a gap as the quality policies and quality indicators used by universities in Kenya, across the region and across the globe are not standard (Bradley, 2005).

Notable also, issues of educational quality, rather than mass production, need to move to the forefront of the educational agenda of policy makers at this level of education in Kenya. Considering this huge public and private investment in university education, there is an urgent need to evaluate the effectiveness of this investment by examining the quality of the educational infrastructure and teaching facilities in place. The study sought to establish the government and government agency contribution to quality at universities in Kenya.

Objectives

The objective of this study was to establish the contribution of Government and Government agencies in promoting quality at universities in Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The definition of quality teaching depends on the meaning one chooses to give to the concept of quality. Harvey and Green (1993) distinguish four

definitions of quality. First, quality as "excellence"- the traditional conception of quality- is the dominant one in many old elite higher education institutions. Second, quality can be defined as "value for money"- a quality institution in this view is one that satisfies the demands of public accountability. Third, quality may be seen as "fitness for purpose"- the purpose being that of the institution, for instance getting students to learn sciences efficiently. The last definition listed by Harvey & Green is that of quality as "transforming". According to this definition, Quality Teaching is teaching that transforms students' perceptions and the way they go about applying their knowledge to real world problems (Harvey & Green 1993).

A broad range of factors affect quality in tertiary institutions including their vision and goals, the talent and expertise of the teaching staff, the quality of the library and laboratories, access to the Internet, governance, leadership, relevance, value added, and a host of others. A tertiary institution is only as good as the quality of its teaching staff; they are the heart of the institution producing its graduates, its research products, and its service to the institution, community, and nation (Hayward, 2006). Quality Teaching has become an issue of importance as the landscape of higher education has been facing continuous changes. The student body has considerably expanded and diversified, both socially and geographically. New students call for new teaching methods. Modern technologies have entered the classroom, thus modifying the nature of the interactions between students and professors. The governments, the students and their families, the employers, the funds providers increasingly demand value for their money and desire more efficiency through teaching (Fabrice & Soleine, 2008).

Improving teacher quality has become the educational mantra of the international community since the turn of the millennium. As Akiba and LeTendre (2009) outlined, educational policymakers

around the world have paid attention to teacher quality as a major vehicle to improve student learning. Attracting competent candidates for the teaching profession, retaining highly-qualified teachers by providing support and incentives, and ensuring students' access to high quality teaching have been major focus of educational reforms in many countries. Teacher quality is seen as the crucial driving force for improving student achievement thus promoting a nation's economic competitiveness in this global society (Akiba & LeTendre, 2009).

Recognizing their importance, and responding to pressure from Governments and employers, universities have started to change teaching and learning practice to take account of the concept of gradueness, implied in the set of skills and attributes. For example, it is recognized that in order to achieve this, it is necessary to move from a teacher-centred approach to a learner-centred approach which emphasizes the education experience of students and allows them to take their

place in the emerging knowledge society (Huba & Freed, 2000).

Theoretical Review

A number of different quality models exist. A quality evaluation model developed by the Higher Education Quality Council (HEQC) and the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) for Higher Education in the UK (1996) are very relevant for programme review, research projects and community services, that is applicable for the teaching resources at universities (Vroeijenstijn, 2001). The model looks at the linkages between the inputs and outputs in achieving university goals and objectives. Inputs considered in this case includes the students, staff, teaching facilities and the internal quality assurance mechanisms while the outputs include the achieved standards, pass rate/drop- out rates, graduation and cost of running the programme per student (Figure 1) . For the university goals and objectives to be achieved therefore, inputs must be processed into desired outputs.

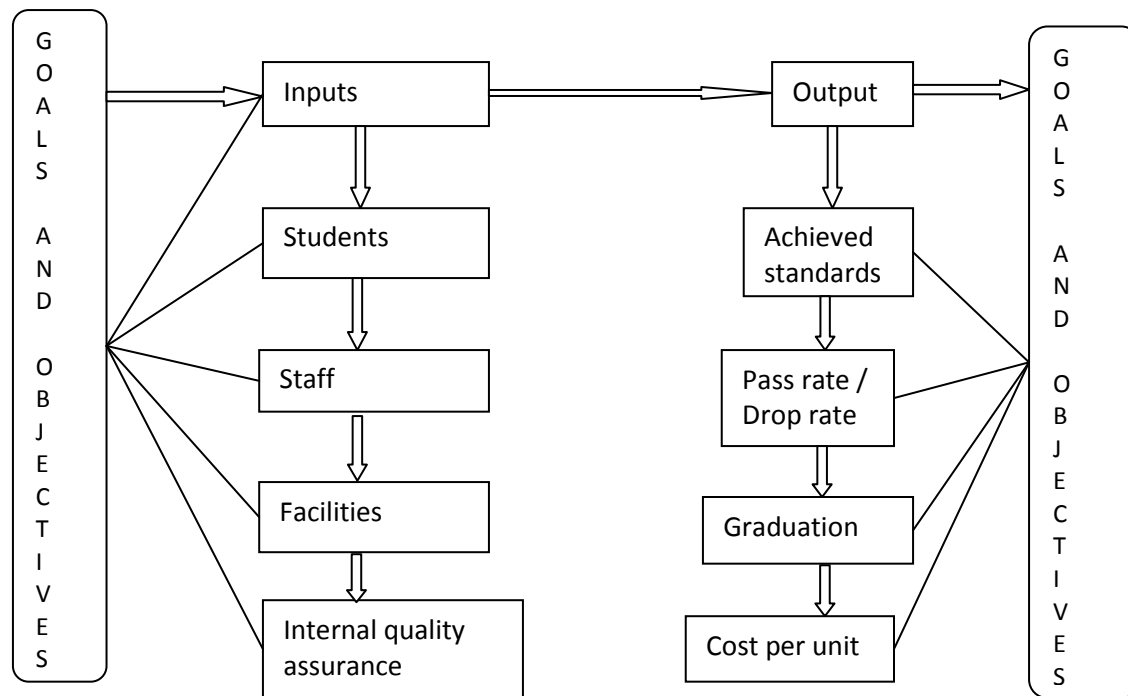


Figure 1: Educational Activities Model

Source: Vroeijenstijn, 2001

Government Contribution to Quality

Over the last two decades there has been a great increase in Government participation in higher education with a move away from a system for the socially and economically privileged; a decrease in per capita funding in many Anglophone Countries; a shift towards user pays; the incorporation into the concept of the modern university of a much broader mission; and significant increases in the numbers of students taught by each member of academic staff. Enrolment of fee paying students from other Countries has become a major source of income for institutions, regions and indeed whole Countries. More recently, the critical role of Universities in underpinning the innovation system as they generate new knowledge has begun to be recognized (Bradley, 2005). Paradoxically as the percentage of the institution's income deriving from national or state Governments has declined, the perceived importance to Governments of higher education as an activity has grown and the desire to gain greater control over it has grown also.

The 'quality' literature (Billing, 2004; Gordon, 2002; El-Khawas, 2001) rarely challenges the reasons which Governments have used to justify national quality regimes. It largely centres on implementation issues- the best way to establish and maintain such regimes. It is not often that the stated purposes themselves are challenged in the manner of Vidovich (2001)'s trenchant analysis of the Australian discourse. In some of the more recent literature in the field, when the writer is critical (Harvey 2002, Biggs 2001, Newton, 2001), the major question is whether the regime leads to better outcomes- in particular better student learning.

Vidovich (2001), demonstrates how the various definitions of quality- standards, assurance, improvement, have been used to advance Government control of Universities. Discussions and contemporary debates within the higher education

sector in Australia would support Vidovich's contention that greater control of the higher education sector was a major reason for the use of the quality discourse by Government, an interpretation held elsewhere, as Newton's work (1999) in a Higher Education College in the UK suggests. There the academics had no doubt that the external quality assurance (QA) initiatives with which they were working were led by accountability rather than improvement concerns. Harvey concludes that External quality monitoring is primarily to ensure accountability and conformity (Harvey, 2002).

With such high international comparison of higher education systems, Kenyan Universities cannot be left behind in the process of becoming part of the other universities that value quality. The Ministry of education has a Directorate of Quality Assurance that monitors the standards that was recently reformed in the realization of the need to strengthen quality assurance at all levels of education and training. This entails effective monitoring of curriculum, development, implementation and evaluation. In addition, the department monitors teacher-training programmes as well as organizing in-service training programmes for serving teachers and education managers in conjunction with other agencies of the Ministry.

The new national quality systems ensure that external scrutiny is brought to bear on institutions that have been largely closed to this form of public assessment. Until relatively recently peer assessment of the performance of individuals and groups both within and among institutions has been the norm, based upon a shared commitment to academic autonomy. Vidovich (2001) would argue that the major intention of the QA policy initiatives of the last decade or more has been to establish greater control over the national system of higher education.

Harvey (2002) concurs, pointing to connections between what has happened in higher education and

the characteristics of the 'new managerialism' with its development of pseudo markets, assessment of organizations' systems of control, action to steer at a distance and creation of experts whose knowledge is the basis of an audit regime.

The aim of Government in establishing national quality regimes is to gain greater control over the activities of higher education institutions (Harvey, 2002). In the process of establishment of such regimes, sector representatives seek to incorporate broader aims into the process of QA. In part, they wish to ensure that the richness and diversity of what Universities do is incorporated into the ambit of the QA system but, too, they seek to subvert the Government's desire for control (Macintyre, 2004).

Quality assurance is also an aspect of the mass system of higher education, a device for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of large, complex institutions that are vital to the nation's needs and in which Government, business, professional associations and hundreds of thousands of domestic and international students have a keen interest. Thus the justification of the creation of the Commission for Higher Education by the Kenya Government through the Act of parliament in 1985 (Chacha, 2004).

Government Agency Contribution

National quality assurance regimes are generally underpinned by four components- an agency at arm's length from Government and institutions, self review/evaluation, institutional visits and reports (El-Khawas, 2001). The agency determines the evaluation criteria, framed by the ostensible purposes for which it has been established by Government. Billing suggests, after interrogating a number of surveys of quality assurance(QA) systems, that there is considerable commonality at the heart of national QA, in the shape of a spectrum from the 'softer' (developmental) improvement/informational functions to the 'harder' (judgmental) legal/financial/planning functions (Billing, 2004).

Some sector representatives have sought to turn Government intentions to control through operation of a relatively narrow conception of QA towards a regime which is more acceptable- more participatory, more connected to the broader and deeper purposes of education and more focused on improvement rather than accountability. So they have wanted to move from QA to QI. If it has been inevitable that a national quality system will be introduced then sector representatives have sought something that might serve broader purposes (Newton, 2002). The passion to identify a few robust performance indicators which would enable the gauging of success of the sector or compare the performance of institutions is, not unique. Thus there have been some very good reasons, strategic and tactical, for sector representatives to work with Government to bring a broader perspective (Billings, 2004).

The accommodation between Government and higher education in most Countries has been to negotiate the establishment of an external QA regime (in this case, the Commission for University Education) premised upon Partnership between Government and higher education, mutual respect, the primacy of educational issues and Participation of educational experts in decisions on educational issues (El-Khawas, 2001). There are various reasons for working with such a regime. First, it's very difficult to run a public argument against 'quality'. Second, it may be that the external regime gives institutional managers a lever to address issues which have been hard to resolve in collegiate environments (Scott et al, 2003).

Gordon (2002), Biggs (2001) and Newton (1999) point to the growth of the power of executive leadership in modern universities and the decline of older concepts of collegial governance. Through this, it is easier for an academic manager to deal internally with controversial initiatives which touch upon issues of academic autonomy like compulsory evaluation of

teaching with the threat of an external audit hanging over an institution (Bradley, 2005).

In Kenya, the Government established the Commission for University Education (CUE) with some of the following major functions: To promote the objectives of university education namely the development, processing, storage and dissemination of knowledge for the benefit of mankind; To advise the minister on the establishment of public universities; To accredit universities; To coordinate the long term planning, staff development, scholarship and physical development of university education and to promote national unity and identity in universities.

Other functions include; To liaise with Government departments and public and private sectors of the economy in matters relating to overall national manpower development and requirements; To cooperate with Government in the planned development of university education; To examine and approve proposals for courses of study and course regulations submitted to it by private universities and to receive and consider applications from persons seeking to establish private universities in Kenya and make recommendations thereon to the Minister university Education

Although these functions gave considerable statutory powers to CUE to run university education, a number of criticisms have been leveled on the operations of the organization. According to Sifuna (1998), only one of CUE's statutory functions, the accreditation of private universities, has been its main preoccupation since its secretariat became operational. According to its statutory powers, CHE was expected to play an active role in the planning, development, budgetary matters and maintaining quality education. The politicisation of planning and development of university education seems to have effectively denied the Commission this particular role (Sifuna, 1998).

Government action in decision making also made it difficult for CUE to play an active role in public university budgetary matters. In practice, after the establishment of CUE, public universities continued to argue their individual budgetary submissions with the treasury, liaising with each other and collectively through the committee of vice-chancellors. CUE statutory requirement to make regulations in respect of admission of persons seeking to enroll in universities and provide central admissions service to public universities, as well as the maintenance of standards for courses and examinations, were rendered inoperative through the creation of the Kenya Universities and Colleges Central Placement Services (KUCCPS).

By 1974, provision of education in general had expanded dramatically and the number of students seeking university education had grown to an extent that it was becoming increasingly difficult to adequately finance university education by providing full scholarships and grants by the Government. The Government therefore introduced the University Students Loans Scheme (USLS), which was managed by the Ministry of Education. Under the scheme, Kenyan students pursuing higher education at Makerere, Nairobi and Dares Salaam universities received loans to cover their tuition and personal needs, which they would repay on completion of their education (Chacha, 2004).

The USLS was plagued with a number of problems right from the onset. It lacked the legal basis to recover matured loans from loanees. In addition, the general public and university students wrongly perceived that the loan was a grant from the Government, which was not to be repaid (Chacha, 2004).

In order to address this problem, in July 1995, the Government, through an Act of Parliament established the Higher Education Loans Board to administer the Student Loans Scheme. In addition,

the Board was also empowered to recover all outstanding loans given to former university students by the Government of Kenya since 1952 and to establish a revolving fund from which funds can be drawn to lend out to needy Kenyan students pursuing higher education. The establishment of a revolving fund was also expected to ease pressure on the exchequer in financing education (Chacha, 2004).

With the rolling of free primary and free secondary education in 2003 and 2008 by the president of the republic of Kenya, President Mwai Kibaki, the demand for higher education short up. The revolving fund from the Higher Education Loans Board was not able to meet the increased demand from the high number of qualified candidates seeking higher education at both public and private universities.

Public universities in Kenya have traditionally relied on Government funding to carry out their activities. Due to the harsh economic situations witnessed by the region over the recent past, Government support to these institutions has seen a steady decline, and the universities have been forced to operate under very tight budgets. The situation has not been made any better by the structural adjustment programmes prescribed by our bilateral partners. The universities have therefore been forced to rethink their strategy, and possibly look for extra sources of financing including establishing income-generating activities (Chacha, 2004).

The funding from Government is also based on the number of students admitted through the Kenya Universities and Colleges Central Placement Service (KUCCPS) and not the unit cost for running the programmes. Institutions have to therefore look for other sources to finance the high expensive programmes such as Engineering, Architecture, Medicine, Science and Agriculture. Funding to these institutions by the Government has also been static over the past four years, despite the growth in demand for university education.

Private universities in Kenya depend for their revenue on the tuition fees they generate from their students. Such heavy dependence on tuition coupled with lack of alternative income sources has made these institutions expensive and thus unaffordable for most Kenyans, in effect, limiting their services to the children of high socio economic status (Chacha, 2004). As elsewhere in Africa, private expansion sprang forth largely due to the public system's failure to meet the demand for higher education.

METHODOLOGY

The design this study adopted was a quantitative research approach. The target population was university teaching staff from all the public and private universities in Kenya. The method of sampling used was stratified random sampling with 5 public and 3 private universities. The sampling frame of the study was lecturers distributed based on the weighted percentage in the stratum, targeting at least 120 respondents, based on optimal allocation with fixed sample size (Neyman allocation) derived. Drop and pick method was used in the data collection where questionnaires were administered by the researcher to the teaching staff at the sampled universities. The data was analyzed using the statistical software, Microsoft excel and other systems. Descriptive statistics reports, representing the various research items were developed during the analysis. The tables generated gave absolute means and percentage responses to all the items in questionnaire using the four point likert scales. The measurement tool ranged from 1 to 4 with 1 representing the minimum score and 4 the maximum rated score. Factor analysis was also done using principal component analysis method. Cross tabulations was also used to assess the relationship between two categorical variables.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The Role of Government and Government Agencies in promoting quality

In the study, the mean levels of acceptance on the level of autonomy and accountability to the Government recorded were 3.34 and 3.23

respectively out of 4. From the results, most of the respondents accepted that universities in Kenya were semi-autonomous (Table 1). Though semi-autonomous, 81% of the respondents agreed that the universities were accountable to the Government either directly or indirectly through the regulatory Government agencies.

Table 1: Relationship between Universities and Government

	Universities are semi- autonomous	Universities are accountable to the Government
N	102	102
Mean	3.34	3.23
Median	3.00	3.00
Std. Deviation	.589	.595
Minimum	2	2
Maximum	4	4
Percentage	83.5	81

Ninety percent of the respondents also agree that the Kenya Government supported student learning at public universities. This was partly because of the Government's commitment to drive education for all across the country as part of its commitment to human resource development. Disbursements of financial resources to the public universities were not prompt and the Government had reduced its daily contribution in the affairs of the universities. The research also indicated that the hiring of senior managers at universities by the Government was not competitively handled and the Government role in the attraction and retention of staff at public universities was minimal (Table 2).

Although the commission university education (CUE) was involved in the regulation of programmes by private universities, their contribution in curriculum development was minimal, with a cumulative 56.5% discrediting the Government's (CUE) contribution. Other areas that the Government and commission for higher education was not actively facilitating included contribution to quality improvement of university programmes, provision of quality and quality assurance guidelines for university resources and facilitation of external quality assurance by the commission (Table 2).

Table 2: Government and CUE Roles in Promoting Quality

	1	2	3	4
	%	%	%	%
1 Universities are semi- autonomous		5.9	53.9	40.2
2 Universities are accountable to the Government		8.8	59.8	31.4
3 Government has a direct hand running of universities	10.8	47.1	24.5	17.6
4 The Government is involved in staffing	14.3	33.7	38.8	13.3
5 Staffing is competitively handled by the Government	18.0	54.0	27.0	1.0
6 remuneration for managers are competitive	17.3	23.5	43.9	15.3
7 Kenyan Government supports projects in universities	7.8	17.6	64.7	9.8
8 Disbursement of financial resources is prompt	19.4	34.7	43.9	2.0

9	Governments supports student learning in public universities	1.0	8.8	64.7	25.5
10	The Governments supports student learning in private universities	8.0	33.0	52.0	7.0
11	Government is able to monitor performance	7.1	36.4	47.5	9.1
12	The Government monitors curriculum on offer	13.9	42.6	37.6	5.9
13	Universities provide quarterly /annual returns/reports to Government on performance	7.7	19.8	65.9	6.6
14	The Government is adequately represented in major decisions of universities	15.2	26.1	50.0	8.7
15	Government encourages staff development	9.0	32.0	48.0	11.0
16	The Government regulates private and public universities through CHE	1.0	17.8	56.4	24.8
17	The commission accredits all programmes offered	10.0	22.0	57.0	11.0
18	The commission is involved in university quality	8.1	39.4	39.4	13.1
19	The commission facilitates external quality assurance	6.1	42.9	40.8	10.2
20	The commission issues guidelines on quality	3.3	39.6	44.0	13.2

An analysis undertaken to ascertain levels of university autonomy as per responses received using the Chi-square Test gave positive results of 0.75 using Pearson chi-square, 0.730 using the likelihood ratio

and 0.529 using linear by linear association. These were as tabulated in Table 3. The results justified the earlier high percentage acceptance that universities are autonomous.

Table 3: Chi-square Test on University Autonomy

	Value	Degrees of freedom	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-square	.576(a)	2	.750
Continuity Correction			
Likelihood Ratio	.629	2	.730
Linear-by-Linear Association	.397	1	.529
N of Valid Cases	102		

On resource disbursement, majority of the respondents disagreed that disbursement to universities was prompt. Only 44 % of the respondents did agree that it was prompt with 2% strongly agreeing (Figure 2). Resources, being a contributor to university operational efficiency, require to be disbursed in a timely manner and the

large negative response of 19% and 35% needs to be addressed. This supported an earlier research by Bradley in 2005 that the percentage of the institution's income derived from national or state Governments has declined even with the growth in the perceived importance of higher education to Governments.

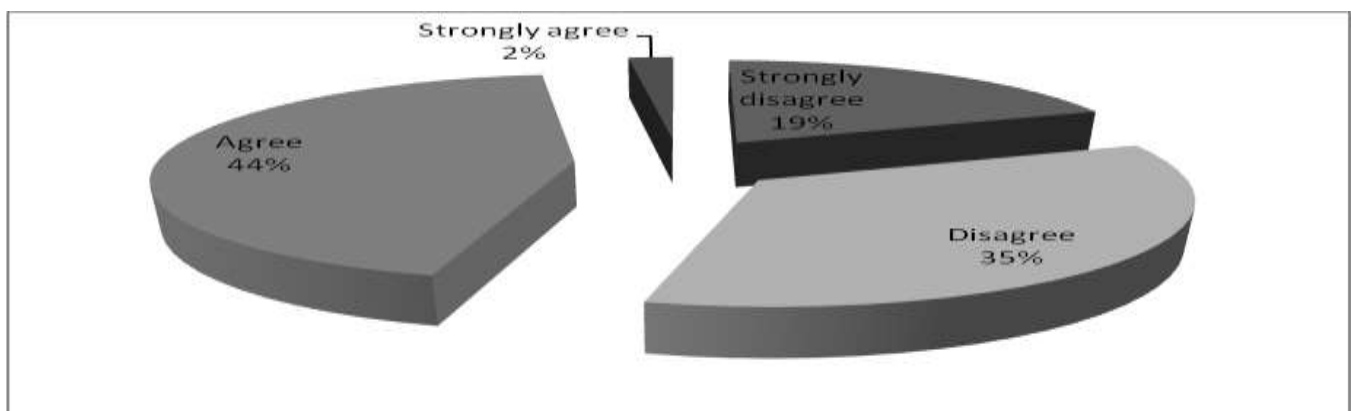


Figure 2: Resource Disbursement

From the results of the study, 13% strongly agreed that the commission issued from time to time guidelines for quality assurance while 44% agreed, giving a cumulative percentage of 57 %. This was a satisfactory response from the stakeholders about the commission's mandate. However, according to its statutory powers, CUE was expected to play an active role in the planning, development, budgetary matters and maintaining quality education. The politicization of quality of university education seemed to have effectively denied the Commission this particular role, thus the 43% negative responses on its ability to monitor and ensure quality of programmes at institutions of higher learning, especially the public universities.

While the Kenya Government monitored the development of curriculum at public universities

through the respective performance contracts and representation during development and implementation, programmes in private universities were first considered and approved by the commission for higher education before roll out. This was aimed at enhancing quality and supports an earlier research by Vidovich (2001) and Billing (2004).

The regulatory role of the commission on both private and public universities, as earlier researched, was still strong with 55.9% of the respondents agreeing and 24.5% strongly agreeing (Figure 3). It therefore meant that the universities adequately understood the regulatory role of the commission as provided in its mandate, and continued to be represented in the commission board, though the commission did not have enough teeth to bite, as provided in its mandate.

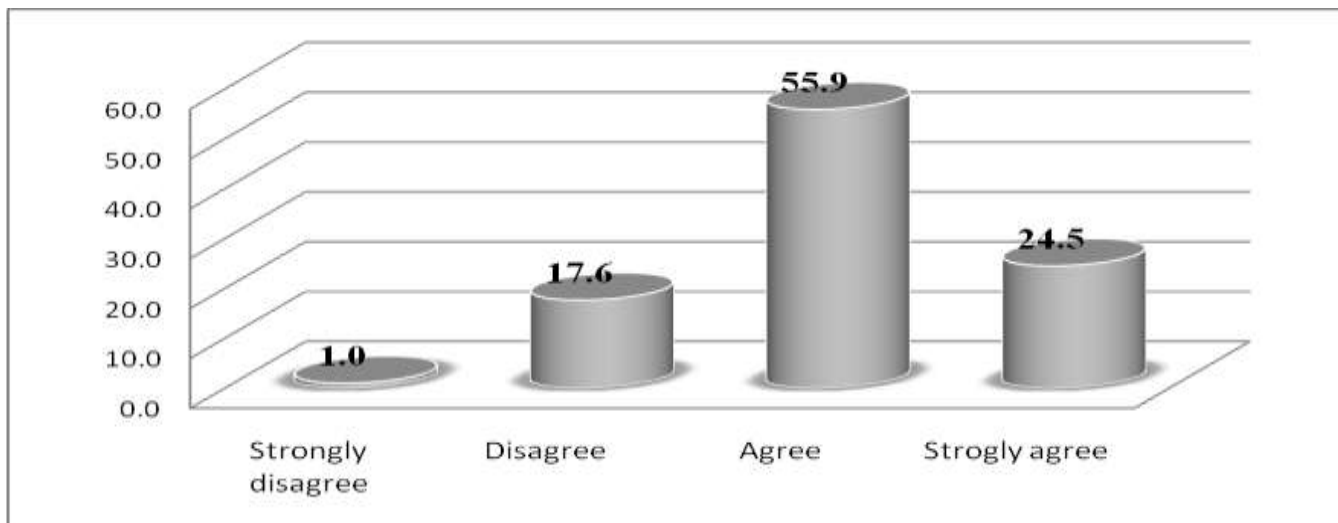


Figure 3: Regulation of both Private and Public Universities

Though limited in capacity, the Commission for University Education has actively been involved in provision of guidelines to ensure quality of programmes and quality of service at universities. For example, all private universities with charters had to show their human resource capacity for various programmes before approvals are made to allow them offer those programmes. The Commission of university education had also provided guidelines for curriculum development across all universities and

unless and until any new programmes had satisfactory met all these requirements; they could not be rolled out. This almost cemented Harvey's earlier research on External quality monitoring to ensure accountability and conformity (Harvey, 2002).

Factor analysis was run on the 20 responses received on the role of Government and Government agencies in promoting quality of teaching staff at universities with results as provided in table 4 below.

Table 4: Factor Analysis on Government Contribution to Quality

	Component					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
A19	.778					
A20	.771					
A16	.672					
A4	.661					
A15		.782				
A5		.759				
A14		.647				
A18		.517	.420			
A11			.885			
A12			.646			
A10			.630			
A17		.435	.592			
A13			.465			-.460
A1				.737		
A2				.636		
A6				-.491		
A3				.423		
A9					.897	
A7					.654	
A8						.864

Using the principal component analysis, rotation method, varimax, with Kaiser Normalization, three items (A8, A18, A17 and A13) were excluded from the results in table 4, resulting into five factors (Figure 4).

The five factors included: quality assurance; staffing and staff development; performance based management; autonomy and mandate of universities and financial resources.

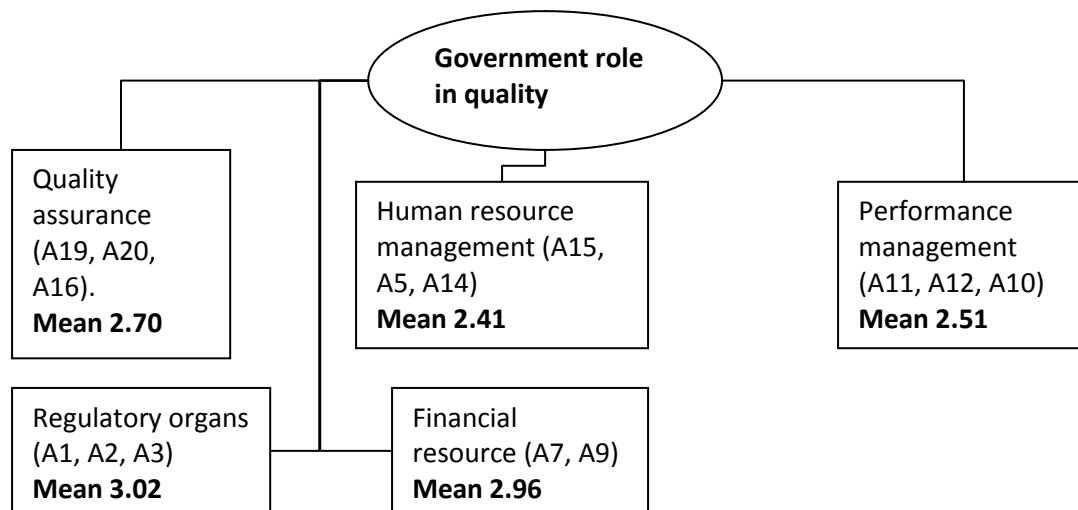


Figure 4: Factor Analysis on Government Role in Quality

From the results, the Government role as a regulatory organ of the universities came highest with a mean of 3.02. These results gave a clear statement that universities remain to be autonomous as provided in the various Charters that established them. The Commission for University Education (CUE), though mandated to monitor quality of programmes on offer at both public and private universities, was not directly able to control the running of these universities as also earlier proved by Sifuna (1998) and Chacha (2004). The missing link on the role of the CUE on university education, especially public universities therefore continued to persist.

The poor ratings on resource and performance management at the universities implied that universities were not able to meet their obligations as and when they fall due as a result of these limitations. This factor had an impact on all the other factors as they rely on financial resources. As also earlier researched by Chacha(2004), funding for higher education by the Government must be re-defined to factor in the unit cost of running the programmes as well as the timely provision of these resources to support the teaching and learning.

SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to the role of Government and Commission for University Education in promoting quality at universities in Kenya. From the study, financial constraints in Kenya meant that the Government could no longer fund higher education to the same extent as previously. The Government contribution to institutions of higher learning had been demeaning over the years. Apart from asking students and their parents to share the cost, the Government's response had been to call for continued efficiency savings (or simple cuts) in institutional budgets, which had led to more severe staff student ratios and heavier workloads for academic staff.

The Government was yet to seriously meet its

obligations as required to the institutions of higher learning. For example, even with the demeaning financing, the disbursement of these resources to the public universities was not prompt. This implied that in most scenarios, universities were not able to meet their obligations if full reliance was on Government disbursements. Such delays had trickled down effects on quality of staff as compensation and monthly remuneration was delayed, thus providing a window for staff to think beyond the box.

The Commission of University Education, which was a regulatory Government agent for universities, was challenged in enhancing quality. From the results, it was clear that with the growth in number of public and private universities in Kenya, the Commission had not been keen in fulfilling its mandate as defined by the universities Act, 2012 and had not developed enough human resource capacity to check on quality of programmes at these universities. Notably in this research was the inability of the commission to vet programmes on offer at public universities, a situation that may impact on quality of such programmes at the expense of the customers and the industry.

The research also indicated that though the CUE, as a Government agency, was involved in the regulation, their contribution in curriculum development was minimal. For instance, the commission involvement during curriculum development so as to align them to industrial or market needs, or at least to provide guidelines for such programme development was nominal. The small direct contribution to quality improvement of university programmes; provision of quality and quality assurance guidelines for university resources and facilitation of external quality assurance by the commission indicated that Interaction between the Government, the CUE and the universities on quality related issues was still short.

CONCLUSIONS

From the study, it came out clear that Government role in promoting quality of the teaching staff at universities required to be improved. Worth consideration was the prompt disbursement of funds to universities by the Government. Delayed disbursement implied that the universities were not able to meet their obligations in a timely manner. Also, resource disbursements to universities had not been matched with the high demand for higher education in Kenya. There was therefore a strong relationship between the government financial contribution to universities, the teaching facilities and quality output by the teaching staff.

With such gaps in financing, the commitments in the Kenya vision 2030 to achieving a higher adult literacy rate; school enrolment rate and transition rate to universities may take a little longer to realize. This was because it may not be possible to increase this transition rates without reducing the cost of higher education, improving the human resource capacities and facilitating expansion of teaching facilities at these institutions. All the public universities and constituent colleges for example limited their admission to bed capacities.

Most of the universities facilities are overstretched by the growing demand for higher education in Kenya

and the continuous decline in Government budget for expansion of university facilities. The Government is yet to finance public universities based on unit cost, thereby discouraging running of some expensive programmes especially in Agriculture, Architecture, Science, Engineering, Medicine and Technology.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From this research, expansion of teaching facilities was necessary to enhance quality. The existing physical teaching facilities as well as their status were a point of reference by the respondents. The Commission for Higher Education needed to come out strongly in regulation of programmes at private universities and enhancing quality of programmes across all universities. The commission should also ensure that only competent and qualified staffs were allowed to teach.

Building capacity for e-content was an investment that would address the current lecturer shortages that could not be adequately addressed in the long-run. Also there was a pressing need to design ICT based curricula rather than treating ICT as a separate education product. With the trend towards embracing ICT and e-content for universities, this area would also require further research so as to balance e-content as a model for knowledge delivery.

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