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Research Article

Stakeholders' Perception on Instructional Effectiveness in Maseno University, Kenya

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ABSTRACT: Higher education in Kenya has experienced tremendous growth since independence. With only one public university with an enrolment of less than 1000, the number stands at twenty two public universities with student population of over 150,000. This growth has been attributed to the introduction of module II programs and increased private and public funding for university education. However, despite the increase in enrolments, there has been no commensurate development and/or improvement of the requisite teaching staff and other teaching and learning resources. Consequently, stakeholders have raised concerns on the instructional effectiveness and the quality of education provided in public universities in Kenya. This study was conceived to establish the effect of university expansion on instructional effectiveness in Maseno University. The study was anchored on the education production function theory and adopted a descriptive design. The study was carried out in Maseno University. The target population was 7,377 comprising of 7,000 undergraduate students and 377 lecturers of Maseno University in the 2011/12 academic year. Simple random sampling was used to select 2,100 students and 114 lecturers making a sample of 2,214. Data was collected using a questionnaire for students and lecturers and document analysis. Research instruments were validated using face and content validity while reliability was determined using the test-retest technique at r= 0.7. A pilot study was conducted in Maseno University and the data collected used to determine the reliability of research instruments. Data was analyzed descriptively using frequencies and percentages by aid of SPSS version 17 and analyzed objectively and presented in tables. Based on these findings, it was concluded that both the teaching staff and students highly did not have enough confidence in the effectiveness of the instructional processes at Maseno University.

Key Words: Perceptions, access, instructional effectiveness, quality education

Introduction

Education is critical to preparing the much needed workforce with proficiency, competences and techniques required to develop and transform the economies of states and governments (UNICEF , 2000; Kipkebut, 2010; Ojiambo, 2009). Thus, the education system is supposed to evolve in tandem with the dynamic needs and demands of the society it serves putting into consideration the factors of access, equity, quality, affordability and relevance in order that it sustainably meets the aspirations of the existing economy and industry (Ojiambo, 2009). Demand for accountability and increasing interest in institutional improvement has led to an increased focus on various aspects of quality in higher education (Patrick and Stanley, 1998). Thus, quality has turned from a debatable and controversial concept into an everyday issue in higher education.

The quality of education, training and learning a student receives is determined by several factors including the quality of the lecturers, training facilities, state of students, teaching approaches, holistic learning environment and outcomes that include knowledge, skills and attitudes (UNICEF, 2000). The Commission for University Education is a regulatory agency charged with the responsibilities of planning, advising, accreditation, establishment, governance, management and quality assurance in higher education in Kenya. In additional all universities are expected to establish internal quality assurance mechanisms (Republic of Kenya, 2012).

Since the introduction of the Module 11 programs, concerns have been raised by various stakeholders on the quality of university education in Kenyan. The sustained expansion of the sub-sector without proper planning has only exacerbated the quality crisis in these institutions.

A study by Synovate in 2008 revealed 57% of the respondents preferred foreign universities to local one due to the perception that the quality of education provided in local universities, especially public ones, was low (Ngare and Muindi, 2008). The quality crisis is attributed to the emerging business-like culture within the institutions, affecting both students and lecturers. Another study by Oanda and Jowi (2013) showed that both public and private universities suffer quality problem due to the increased expansion which has resulted to lack of qualified teaching staff and teaching and learning facilities. The study further noted that examinations in most institutions are moderated downwards to accommodate weaker students or shortened semesters that occasion poor teaching and learning.

The poor quality of education in institutions of higher learning in Kenya is reflected in a ranking of universities across the world. In a survey by Ranking Web of World Universities, Nairobi University was ranked 25 in Africa and 4,338 in the world, followed by Strathmore at 29 in Africa and 4,780 in the world, Egerton University at position 32 in Africa and 5,203 in the world, Africa Virtual University at 67 and 7,688 worldwide and JKUAT and Moi University taking positions 75 and 81 respectively in Africa and 8,085 and 8,393 in the world (Keriga, 2009).

A review of performance of students in examinations for first

year students at Kenyatta University in the 1986/87 and 1987/88 by Hughes and Mwiria (1990) painted a striking picture of the deteriorating quality. The study showed that the proportion of first year students failing, repeating or taking supplementary examinations increased by 57%. Most of those affected by this were those joining the institution during the 1987 double intake. This was attributed to the poor quality in educational experience brought about by increased enrolments.

Wanzala (2013) noted that the poor situation of teaching staff compounded with low salaries does not motivate quality performance in the institutions. In addition, poor teaching methods in resource limited environments negatively impacts students, thus compromising the quality of graduates. Further, the examination system has come into poor reputation of irregularities through tribalism, nepotism, cheating, plagiarism, university administration favoring students in case of examination irregularities, marks being exchanged for sex and students corrupting university officials to print for them transcripts and degree certificates with desired grades. Additionally, poor response to technological advances, poor administration, poor student welfare services and frequent student unrest, have significantly contributed to poor quality education, training and learning in higher institutions.

Okiogal, Nyakundi, Onsongo and Nyaboga (2012) noted that lecturing is the predominant teaching method in Kenyan universities, and that rote learning is common, with instructors doing little more in the classroom than copying their notes onto a blackboard. Students, who are frequently unable to afford a textbook and access other learning resources merely transcribe the notes, and those who can regurgitate a credible portion of their notes from memory achieve exam success. Brown and Atkins (1988) argued that lecturing becomes monotonous and sends the learners to sleep. Studies by Gibbs and Jenkins, (1990) revealed that students typically capture a small proportion of the essential material in a lecture, and that there is little evidence to show that note taking leads to better learning than simple listening. Only a small proportion of the notes taken by students are ever referred to for revision or any other purpose. To improve on learning, the lecturer should help the students to create good sets of notes and ensure they have reasons to refer to them as soon as possible after the lecture. A study by Dradi, Oser and Patry (1990) found out that learning is more successful in lessons that employ more than one method of representation. These studies show that students taught purely by the traditional oral method perform poorly. There is a direct relationship between successful lecturing and effective learning and studying. Lecturers need to challenge their students to think critically and analytically through asking challenging questions within the lesson (Cryer and Elton, 1992). They can also improve the effectiveness of the lecture to promote cognitive challenge by encouraging students to interact with each other and material. This can be through small group problems and exercises (Gibbs, and Jenkins, 1990).

According to Misaro, Jonyo and Kariuki (2013) local universities are forced to work under adverse conditions including poor salaries, lack of resources for teaching and learning material such as textbooks, journals and research equipment. This has resulted in a lowering of academic standards and of quality of graduates who are found deficient in written communication and technical proficiency which make them unfit for the job market.

Republic of Kenya (2004) noted the local universities face a deficit in terms of both quantity and quality of human resources, raising doubts on the ability of the institutions to adopt modern technology and innovation to transform the knowledge generated into final products and equip the graduates with the desired skills necessary to be effective as productive workers.

The low quality in input and output in higher education in Kenya has been attributed to the increase in admission numbers since the inception of parallel and other diploma and certificate programs. The high student numbers do not match the available physical facilities such as lecture halls resulting to overcrowding libraries and other facilities. The low quality of learning in the institutions of higher learning has also been blamed on large number of admissions, lower and more flexible admission criteria and the liberalization of academic institutions which is seen to promote the concept of 'education for sale'. The introduction of the parallel or module II program has been blamed for the diluting of quality. Other factors that lead to poor quality include poor remuneration of academic staff, lack of financial support from the government for research and development and a lack of comprehensive data base for research and technology (Keriga, 2009).

Abagi (1996) noted that as a result of the expansion witnessed in university education in Kenya, the number of students and teaching staff overwhelm the available resources, including libraries which hold outdated books and journals. Kavulya (2004) established that libraries in Kenyan universities did not positively contribute to effective teaching and learning as they have unsuitable and inadequate resources.

This study sought to establish the perception of students and lecturers on the suitability, accessibility and adequacy of several factors that contribute to effective teaching and learning, inter alia, lecture space, library resources, laboratory resources, internet for teaching and learning, academic qualifications and experience of teaching staff, and the contribution by teaching staff to research and publication.

Statement of the Problem

The aim of expanding university education in Kenya is to produce adequate qualified and skilled human resource to steer the country to achieve industrialization by 2020, Vision 2030. However, increase in student enrollment amidst inadequate provision of teaching and learning facilities poses serious challenges to the instructional effectiveness in Kenyan universities which has far reaching effect on the quality of education offered. Kenyan universities have been accused of churning graduates who are not adequately equipped with the

competencies required in the world of work. As a result, the public and private investment in university education may not bear the desired results.

The Objective

The objective of this study was to establish perceptions of students and lecturers on instructional effectiveness in Maseno University.

Conceptual Framework

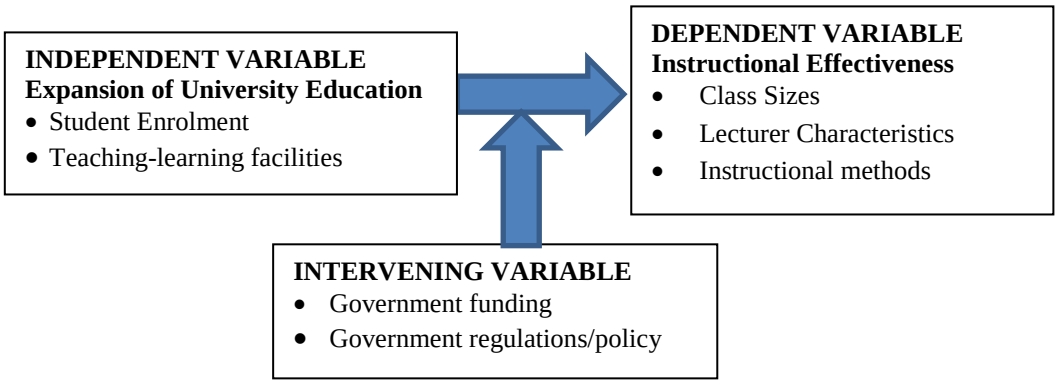

Figure1: Conceptual Framework

From Figure 1 above, students' enrolment, teaching learning facilities and characteristics of teaching staff are crucial in determining instructional effectiveness at Maseno University. In this relationship, expansion of university education (student enrolment, teaching-learning facilities and academic staff characteristics) are the independent variables while instructional effectiveness is the dependent variable. This relationship assumes that instructional effectiveness is a function of expansion of university education which leads to a nature and trends in student enrolment, adequacy and use of teaching resources, research outputs, instruction methods and quality of student-lecturer academic interactions.

Other than the number of students enrolled, instructional effectiveness may also be affected by other variables such as government funding, government regulations/policy, students' socio-economic status, fees charged/collected and courses/programs offered.

Research Method

This study adapted the survey design. Survey gives more accurate research results by enabling the researcher to gather data from a large population of the study area (Oppenheim, 2003). According to Kerlinger (1973), survey is a method that studies large population (universe) by selecting and studying the sample(s) from the population to discover the relative incidence, distribution and interrelations of sociological and psychological variables. In this study, expansion of university education was the independent variable while instructional effectiveness was the dependent variable.

The target population for this study was 7,377 comprising of 7,000 students and 377 lecturers in Maseno University at the time of this study. Stratified and simple random sampling techniques were used to select the students and lecturers. Stratification ensured that the researcher targeted both the science and art-based groups in the population (Dalen, 1979). Simple random sampling was used to select 2,100 students and 114 lecturers making a sample of 2,214.

Data was collected using questionnaires for students and lecturers. Research instruments were validated using face and content validity while reliability was determined using test-retest technique at r= 0.7. A pilot study was conducted in one public university and the data was used in the reliability of research instruments. Data was analyzed descriptively using frequencies and percentages and presented in tables.

Findings and Discussions

Class Sizes

The study sought to establish the smallest and the largest class size in Maseno University. Students and lecturers were asked to indicate the category of the smallest and largest class they have attended or taught. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Class Sizes

Category	Smallest Class Size			Total	Largest Class Size			Total
	<20	20-50	51-100		101-200	201-300	> 300	
Students	0	564 (28.1%)	1,443 71.9%	2,007 100%	1,300 (64.8%)	603 (30%)	104 (5.2%)	2,007 100%
Lecturers	0	34 (32.3%)	71 (67.7%)	105 (100%)	52 (49%)	37 (35.4%)	16 (15.6%)	105 (100%)

The study established that there were no classes of less than 20 students. 564 (28.1%) of students and 34 (32.3%) of teaching staff reported class sizes of 20-50 students. The majority of students, 1,443 (71.9%) students and 71 (67.7%) of teaching staff reported classes of 51-100 students. 1,300 (64.8%) of students and 52 (49%) of teaching staff reported

classes of 101-200; 603 (30%) of students and 37 (35.4%) teaching staff reported classes of 201-300. 104 (5.2%) students and 16 (15.6%) of teaching staff reported classes of more than 300.

Pescolido and Aminzade (1999) blame universities for turning into profit-making organizations which focus more on efficiency by admitting more students regardless of the quality of education. As reported by Sifuna (1998) the large classes in public universities are as a result of increased access to university without much regard to the effect on effective teaching and learning. Unfortunately, this has caused overcrowding in classrooms with some students listening to lectures while standing outside the lecture halls. Proponents of smaller classes argue that small classes produce more academic achievement (Spitzberg and Thorndike, 1992; Nata, 2003; Machir and Vignoles, 2005). When classes are too large, students are distracted by off-task behaviors and the teachers find it hard to monitor and supervise students (Keeves and Watanabe, 2003). Hence the relationship between achievement and class size may be negative if students in small classes benefit from the improved contact with teachers (Organzation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2006). Large classes that also lack adequate and suitable sitting space cause lack of concentration and student attention leading to rote learning (Gudo et. al., 2011). The large classes reported in Maseno University are likely to negatively impact on the teaching and learning processes and hence the quality of education.

Designation of Academic Staff

The study sought to establish the designation of teaching staff. This was considered useful in determining their qualifications and experience. Teaching staff were asked to indicate whether they were Professors, Associate Professors, Senior Lecturers, Lecturers or Assistant Lecturers. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Designation of Teaching Staff

Category	Professors	Associate Professor	Senior Lectures	Lecturer	Assistant Lecturer	Total
Art-based	6	5	7	32	22	72
Science-based	5	7	5	8	8	33
Total	11	12	12	40	30	105
	10.5%	11.4%	11.4%	38.1%	28.6%	100%

From Table 2, it can be seen that the majority of the sampled teaching staff, 70 (66.7%), are at Lecturer and Assistant Lecturer levels. Majority of these, 57 (77.1) are in the art-based departments, which could be attributed to the many number of programs in the Art-based departments. There were 11 (10.5%) professors, 12 (11.4%) associate professors, 12 (11.4%) senior lecturers, 40 (38.1%) lecturers and 30 (28.6%) assistant lecturers across the 6 (31.6%) out of the 19 departments sampled for this study.

Oanda and Jowi (2013) reported that both public and private universities suffer quality problem due to the increased expansion which has resulted to lack of qualified teaching staff. Sifuna (1998) reported that the rapid expansion of the university education had far reaching effect on the quality of the teaching staff. Universities had resorted to relaxing the recruitment and promotion criteria. In practically all the universities, a PhD degree is no longer a requirement for tenure and publications are a less important criteria for promotion. Consequently many of the academic staffs who in the past would not have qualified for university teaching are now doing so. Moreover, it is no longer possible to attract competent staff from abroad to teach in the public universities. While all staff need not be at very high level, there is need to mix this with other staff with higher qualifications so that those with lesser qualifications can learn from those with more. Tettey (2009) reported that there was shortage of qualified teaching staff for universities in Kenya. For example, by 2008, PhD staff accounted for only 34% of the teaching staff in Kenya Universities. In a related study, Owuor (2012) reported that only 43.9% of the teaching staff at the universities of Nairobi, Kenyatta, Egerton, JKUAT, MMUST, Moi and Maseno had up to PhD qualifications, while the remaining 56.1% had masters and below qualifications. Due to this shortage of qualified teaching staff, universities are forced to share the few available qualified staff, with the situation being worse at campuses (Oanda and Jowi, 2014). Least qualified teaching staffs as the ones reported in Maseno University are not well equipped to master content and to select and apply the most appropriate instructional methods, thereby raising doubts on the quality of education provided in the institution.

Teaching Experience of Academic Staff

Teacher's experience plays a key role in the teaching and learning process. Teachers who have long working experience

develop strong instructional skills which promote learning outcomes (Blaug, 1970). With experience the teacher learns a lot that is not included in the professional courses, including the social situation of the classroom (Cryer and Elton, 1992). This study sought to establish the length of experience of academic staff in Maseno University. Lecturers were asked to indicate the category of length of service. The results are tabulated in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Years of Teaching

Years	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative
1 – 5	26	25	25
6 – 10	40	38.5	63.5
11 – 20	30	28.2	91.7
> 20	9	8.3	100
Total	105	100	

Table 3 shows that majority of the sampled teaching staff, 66 (63.5%), had up to 10 years of teaching experience at university level. Only 39 (36.5%) had teaching experience of more than 10 years.

The caliber of teachers greatly influences educational output (Psacharapoulus and Woodwall, 1985). Least experienced lecturers are less likely to choose and apply more effective teaching methods to achieve higher cognitive objectives (Brown and Atkins, 1988). As indicated by Chacha (2004) and Sifuna, (1998), universities in Kenya have difficulty finding and/or retaining teaching staff with more experience as a result of the expansion of university education in Kenya**.** This is likely to compromise the instructional effectiveness in the university since such staff is least equipped to select and apply effective instructional methods and teaching and learning resources. They are also not well prepared to manage the large classes in the institution and to relate learning to experience, meaning, problem solving and development of insight (Burns, 1995). Thus, least experienced teaching staff as reported in the study area are least likely to support effective teaching and learning.

Teaching Staff Contribution to Research and Publications

Teaching staff at the university are expected to contribute to knowledge through research and publication. This is because the curriculum at this level is lecture-dependent (Shank, 2004) and teaching staff who do not participate in research and publication are considered redundant**.** The academic staffs were requested to indicate the status of their research and contribution. The results are tabulated in Table 4.

Table 4: Contribution to Research and Publication

Activity	None	1 – 5	6 – 10	> 10	Total
Research	0 (0.0%)	20 (19.0%)	54 (51.4%)	31 (30.2%)	105 (100%)
Publication	8 (7.6%)	31 (29.5%)	42 (40.0%)	24 (22.9%)	105 (100%)

Data on contribution to research and publication indicated that 20 (19.0%) of the sampled teaching staff had conducted up to 5 academic research activities, with the majority, 54 (51.4%), having conducted 6-10 research projects. Only 31 (30.2%) had conducted more than 10 research projects. In terms of publication, 8 (7.6%) of the teaching staff had not published any work, 31 (29.5%) had contributed up to 5 publications. The majority, 42 (40.0%) had contributed 6-10 publications, while only 24 (22.9%) had contributed more than 10. Universities state in their constitutive instruments that one of the key functions and objects of a university institution is to provide facilities for research. However, no research fund is created to give direct grant to universities (Okiogal et al, 2012). Studies indicate that research and publishing by teaching staff in Kenyan universities has sharply dropped over the last few years, a situation attributed to heavy teaching responsibilities brought about by the rising student numbers, and the practice of taking on teaching roles at other institutions so as to make some extra money to supplement the meager pay (Chacha, 2004). With university the curricula being dependent on the lecturer, the lack of research and is likely to compromise instructional effectiveness since such staff cannot create new knowledge or criticize the existing knowledge. Instructional Methods used Instructional methods greatly determine the outcome of teaching and learning activities. Students and lecturers were requested to rate the use of various methods of teaching at Maseno university. The results are tabulated in Table 5.

Table 5: Instructional Methods

Instructional Method	Frequently Used		Rarely Used		Never Used	
	Students	Lecturers	Students	Lecturers	Students	Lecturers
Lecture	2007 (100%)	114 (100%)	0	0	0	0
Tutorial	1080 (53.8%)	45 (42.9%)	593 (29.6%)	41 (39.1%)	334 (16.6%)	19 (18.1%)
Presentations	1,327 (66.1%)	54 (51.4%)	506 (25.2%)	46 (43.8%)	174 (8.7%)	5 (4.8%)
Group Discussions	1,834 (91.4%)	75 (71.4%)	173 (8.6%)	30 (28.6%)	0	0
Workshops	0	0	0	0	2,007 (100%)	105 (100%)
Practical	477 (100%)	26 (100%)	0	0	0	0
Experiments	477 (100%)	26 (100%)	0	0	0	0
Field Trips	536 (26.7%)	9 (8.6%)	851 (42.4%)	43 (41.0%)	620 (30.9%)	53 (50.4%)

100% (2,007 and 105) of the students and teaching staff indicated that the lecture method is the most predominant in Maseno University, followed by 1,834 (91.4%) of students and 75 (71.9%) of teaching staff who indicated the use of group discussions with 1,327 (66.1%) of students and 54 (51.4%) teaching staff reporting the use of presentation method. 100% of the students and teaching staff indicated they never use the workshop and seminar methods, followed by 620 (30.9%) of students and 53 (50.4%) of teaching staff who reported lack of use on the field trip method. 100% of the students and teaching staff in the science-based programs indicated they use both the practical and experiment methods. The tutorial method is reported to be rarely used by 593 (29.6%) students and 41 (39.1%) teaching staff reported they rarely used the tutorial method, with a further 334 (16.6%) and 19 (18.1%) of students and teaching staff respectively reporting the tutorial method is never used. These findings correspond to report by Okiogal et al (2012) which noted that lecturing is the predominant teaching method in Kenyan universities, and that rote learning is common, with instructors doing little more in the classroom than copying their notes onto a blackboard.

These findings agree with a study by Oketch (2003) which found out that due to the rising number of students, tutorials that would otherwise be used to provide the opportunity for smaller classes are no longer used in universities in Kenya. Wanzala (2013) reported poor teaching methods in resource limited environments in public universities negatively impacts students, thus compromising the quality of graduates. Dradi et al (1990) observed out that learning is more successful in lessons that mix the lecture method with other methods.

The overreliance on the lecture method, and the lack or rare use of the other more student-centered methods can be attributed to the large class sizes which cannot allow for other effective methods or poor qualification and less teaching experience on the part of the teaching staff hence the inability to choose and apply effective methods. This is likely to result to poor learning among the affected students.

Conclusion

The study found that the unreasonably large classes which is likely to inhibit instructional effectiveness. In terms of the cadres of teaching staff, majority of the teaching staff were at Lecturer and Assistant Lecture levels, with very few being at Professor and Associate Professor levels. The study established that majority of the teaching staff did not adequately contribute to both research and publication activities. On the instructional methods, the study found that the lecture is the predominant methods instruction especially for the art-based courses. Based on these findings, it was concluded that both the teaching staff and students highly did not have enough confidence in the effectiveness of the instructional processes at Maseno University.

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