
**HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE WAKE OF DEVOLUTION IN KENYA:
CHALLENGES AND MITIGATIONS. A HISTORICAL STUDY OF
KENYA'S UNIVERSITY EDUCATION**

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Abstract

This study is a historical study on Higher education in the wake of Devolution in Kenya: challenges and Mitigations. The study employed desk top and document review as a methodology of data collection and analysis. A critique of various books, articles and Manuscripts from different Authors was carried out by the researcher and work was also subjected to peer review. Kenya's decentralization is among the most rapid and ambitious devolution processes going on in the world, with new governance challenges and opportunities as the country builds a new set of county governments from scratch. The constitution of Kenya 2010 notably provided for a major devolution; not only of resources and functions, but also creating a whole new layer of county government. In this dispensation of change in Kenyan history, university education has not been left behind, with each of the 47 counties country over looking forward to establish at least one institution of Higher education. In addition the existing and older universities moving in speed to establish campus and branches in those counties with none or else seems to be fertile ground for growth of a university or universities. This study has found that; the major challenges facing universities being; Inter-university competition has been very high as large and old universities tries to outdo smaller, young and upcoming universities, With this cut throat competition, it has come up with it strengths and it challenges. On one hand, it has made university education in Kenya affordable, increased access and low the unit cost of university education while on the other hand has the following challenges, it has led to compromising Higher education quality, exam cheating is rampant, commercialization of Higher education, lack of standardization, use of poor/un-conducive learning environments, overstressed learning facilities, shortage of qualified teaching staff and use of unqualified teaching staff, unqualified student being enrolled, increased immorality and uncalled for student behaviours, reduced exchequer financing of higher education among many others. Among the mitigation, the government through the ministry of education has come up with stringent control measures to a level where some universities or their campuses and or their branches have been ordered to be closed. CUE has deregistered some Higher education institution and gazetted all registered Higher education institutions in Kenya.

Keywords: Access, Affordable, Counties, constitution of Kenya 2010, Challenges, decentralization, Devolution, Higher education institution, Mitigations, university Education,

Introduction

The idea of an institution for higher learning in Kenya goes back to 1947 when the Kenya government drew up a plan for the establishment of a technical and commercial institute in Nairobi. By 1949, this plan had grown into a concept aimed at providing higher technical education for the African Great Lakes region. In September 1951, a Royal Charter was issued to the Royal Technical College of East Africa and the foundation stone of the college was laid in April 1952.

During the same period, the Asian Community of East Africa was also planning to build a college for Arts, Science and Commerce as a memorial to Mahatma Gandhi. To avoid duplication of efforts, Gandhi Memorial Academy Society agreed to merge interests with those of the East African Governments. Thus, the Gandhi Memorial Academy was incorporated into the Royal Technical College of East Africa in April 1954, and the college proceeded to open its doors to the first intake of students in April 1956.

Soon after the arrival of students at the college, the pattern of higher education in the African Great Lakes came under scrutiny. Through the recommendation of a working party formed in 1958, chaired by the Vice-Chancellor of the University of London, Sir John Lockwood, the Royal Technical College of East Africa was transformed. On 25 June 1961, the college became the second university college in East Africa, under the name "Royal College Nairobi."

It was renamed "University College, Nairobi" on 20 May 1964. On the attainment of "University College" status, the institution prepared students for bachelor's degrees awarded by the University of London. In 1966 it began preparing students exclusively for degrees of the University of East Africa, with the exception of the Department of Domestic Science. With effect from July 1, 1970, the University of East Africa was dissolved and the three African Great Lakes countries set up their national universities. This development saw the birth of the University of Nairobi set up by an Act of Parliament.

Since 1970, the university grown from a faculty based university serving a student population of 2,768 to a college focused university serving over 68,000 students.

Kenya higher education fraternity has undergone tremendous transformation in the recent past. Key among them was the enactment of Universities Act No. 42 of 2012 which commenced on 12th December 2012. This brought the establishment, governance and administration of universities under same legal framework. The new law also caused some public university constituent colleges operating under Legal Orders to be upgraded to full-fledged public universities.

Study Methodology

This study is a historical study on Higher education in the wake of Devolution in Kenya. It focuses on challenges and Mitigations. The study employed historical research design to gather and analysis data. The design involved desk top document review as a methodology of data gathering/collection and analysis. A critique of various books, articles and Manuscripts from different Authors was carried out by the researcher and the findings subjected to peer review and critique in order to make it authoritative enough. The purpose of a historical research design is to collect, verify, and synthesize evidence from the past to establish facts that defend or refute a hypothesis. It uses secondary sources and a variety of primary documentary evidence, such as, diaries, official records, reports, archives, and non-textual information [maps, pictures, audio and visual recordings]. The limitation is that the sources must be both authentic and valid.

Global perspective of Challenges facing higher education institutions

Stephanie Bryant (2013), the landscape is changing. Higher education is being reshaped by globalization and the digital revolution. There are growing pressures related to declining sources of income and rising costs. There is heightened competition for share of the global student market. Institutions are seeing a lasting effect from the global financial crisis impacting both enrolment numbers and philanthropy, and students have increasing demands and expectations of their educational experience.

Prospective students are becoming more consumer-orientated and making decisions about education accordingly. University rankings will increasingly have more influence on positioning institutions in the international market, and graduate career-readiness is a growing student concern.

Students are looking for access to services and education across new technologies and more flexible delivery options. In order to be competitive and to meet these expectations, universities will need to invest in expensive facilities and infrastructure.

Stephanie Bryant (2013), Recruitment of international Higher Degree by Research (HDR) students is also of great importance to research intensive universities. The ability to attract and retain high caliber, front-rank students (the next generation of research leaders) both nationally and internationally in the increasingly competitive higher education environment is paramount to help drive globally important research agendas.

Just as competition for student recruitment is increasing around the world, so too is the competition for talented staff. National performance assessments, such as the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) in the United Kingdom and the Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) initiative locally, have now become entrenched. This has resulted in rapidly increasing

demand for a relatively small pool of talented researchers, sought after due to their good performance across these measures.

Additionally, due to the high cost of research infrastructure, it is becoming vitally important for universities to develop partnerships that bring together research teams of equal strength, across university, government and business sectors globally. Going forward, the development of deeper, genuinely collaborative relationships will become more crucial for those universities wanting to be successful on the global stage as much of the equipment required in research is so costly that purchase through consortia and networks will be the only way to function at optimum levels.

Ultimately, a university's ability to differentiate itself in market; recruit a diverse student body; attract and retain staff of international distinction; secure multifaceted partnerships and generate philanthropic support will be key to surviving the challenges the sector faces.

Stephanie Bryant (2013), In addition to the challenges the University of Adelaide faces on a global scale as an international higher education institution, there are national and local issues affecting the way this University plans for its future relevance and sustainability.

In 2012, the Australian Government implemented its plan for universal student access, demand-driven funding and greater levels of university accountability. The most significant aspect of these government reforms was the uncapping of undergraduate student places, enabling unrestricted student access to government funded places. This has heightened competition for students nationally and locally between University of Adelaide and emerging international providers, public and for-profit— all competing for the Australian undergraduate student pool.

Accountability has always been an important consideration for any institution in receipt of public funding however University of Adelaide, since 2012 and the introduction of the Australian Government's higher education reform program, there has been an increased expectation on universities to formally demonstrate their value as a return on the public's investment. The government introduced the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) which evaluates higher education providers against a new Higher Education Standards Framework. Increased intervention in university standards by government will continue through such mechanisms, yet the security of government funding continues to destabilise.

Greater levels of accountability for research performance have also been a focus of the Australian Government. Funding will be more explicitly linked to performance and rankings. This is accelerating demand and greater competition for highly talented staff and students.

All universities in Australia have been tasked with substantially increasing the provision of places to low socio-economic status (low SES) students. Consequently there has been great concentration and investment directed towards engaging students from traditionally underrepresented cohorts, and providing access and pathways into higher education for all

potential students. Additionally, to prevent social restriction, it is necessary to fund more scholarships to support students in need.

Stephanie Bryant (2013), Locally, the central teaching hospital, the Royal Adelaide Hospital is being rebuilt on a new site further away from main campus. The consequence of this is that University of Abelaide must relocate its medical, nursing and dental schools so that the students have access to clinical practice facilities. This represents an enormous investment in development and new infrastructure.

Additionally, remaining competitive in the global student market continues to be a challenge. The combination of Australia's strong economic performance resulting in a sharp increase in the value of the Australian dollar, coupled with the country's reputation for restrictive visa rules (which have since been relaxed), has resulted in low University of Abelaider international student application numbers and a decline in university income.

Addressing these challenges

The challenges ahead in higher education are great. However, the University of Adelaide is fortunate in its setting, historical heritage, robust financial health and its standing in the community. The 10-year strategic plan released at the end of 2012 will take the university to the eve of its 150th anniversary in 2024. The vision for the next 10 years is bold and designed to address the key issues such as rising costs and reduced funding, heightened competition for students and staff, intensified government intervention, increased relevance of performance measures and rankings, and an inability to sustain growth/rely on student expansion as a key budget driver.

University of Abelaide aim to overcome these challenges with a clear identity and sense of purpose. In order to retain and enhance it attraction to students in the increasingly competitive environment, University of Abelaide need to offer a compelling educational proposition. University of Abelaide was committing to an approach that will recapture the union of teaching and research and feature the small-group learning experience. University of Abelaide also plan to significantly invest in information technology (IT) and e-learning to enhance online learning resources and multimodal delivery formats. However University of Abelaide will never become an online-only course provider: the face-to-face campus experience is one of it great strengths. Technology will enrich what University of Abelaide traditionally deliver.

The university will increase its research capacity through recruiting more internationally high impact researchers aligned to its core research strengths and by doubling the number of full PhD scholarships offered. University of Abelaide will intensify collaboration between it researchers and industry and have researchers coalesce around grand challenges such as food security, sustainable energy and abundant clean water.

University of Abelaide intend to build a number of new facilities: most urgently a new integrated medical, nursing and dental school. It will also need to undertake new development on campus and intensify the use of it existing spaces.

The University of Adelaide will reanimate its quest for the resources, facilities and scholarships it requires through creating new partnerships and generating more philanthropic support. But it will also review its investment policy, approach to cost containment and debt financing and other ways to fund its future aspirations.

And so in this rapidly changing environment, the University of Adelaide will face its resource challenges with imagination and will continue to build relationships and invite support from government, industry, business, alumni and the community to share in advancing its future.

Challenges Facing Higher Education in Africa

<http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?> (10/6/2016)

A discussions on Africa higher education held in Nairobi Kenya by the “Higher Education Policy, Leadership and Governance Grantee Convening”, held from 14-15 May 2013 brought together grantee organisations of the Carnegie Corporation of New York working in higher education in Africa identified a range of significant challenges facing higher education in Africa. Among them:

One was that while new patterns of funding were emerging within universities, “at the same time there is too much engagement in funding. Funding is being engaged as an end in itself, with no real strategic knowledge of what the funds will be committed to,” the report said.

Second, there was too much focus on providing external oversight to universities, while “not enough is being done to cultivate the capacity for evaluation and accountability from within. The role of councils in transformation has not been properly crystallised.”

Third, while frameworks had been created to provide oversight, “research shows that the status quo is still being maintained. There is no new leadership (external or internal) emerging,” noted the report. Fourth, there was consistent conflict between management and staff unions.

Fifth, there were high expectations about what organisations and regulatory bodies should do, but little understanding of the challenges they faced. “Capacities of regulatory and umbrella bodies need to be enhanced.”

Finally, although this was slowly changing, there was not a well-developed and sustained body of higher education scholarship. “There are pockets of expertise.”

Recommendations for ways forward

Three recommendations came out of the Nairobi convening.

The first was to organise a summit on higher education in Africa towards the end of 2014, with the Senegal-based NGO Trust Africa as the secretariat and a charter on higher education to be the result.

“The summit would present a platform for accountability and reporting that would lead to standardised compliance and African agreement on standards for higher education,” said the report. Actors would use the platform to share expertise, data, advocate and network.

“The summit would lay the groundwork for further collaboration including future initiatives such as the development of African Rankings.”

There was consensus on the importance of higher education embracing an open data policy. It was suggested that the participating organisations and councils could upload information and data onto the African Higher Education Website as open data. A forum to discuss open data was proposed as a means of popularising the approach.

“Participants however noted that most available data was in English, which limited Francophone and Lusophone actors in the higher education sector. The use of multimedia applications such as images, sounds and documentaries was encouraged as a way of engaging different audiences and influencing policy development.”

Finally, it was recommended that the role and effectiveness of higher education councils be strengthened, and that technical and financial assistance be made available to councils to enable them to enhance their impact in the higher education sector.

“It was agreed that moving councils forward was a priority,” the report concluded.

Challenges facing management of higher education in Kenya.

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There have been various challenges facing the higher education management. These challenges have adversely affected the attainment of higher education for many Kenyans who may wish to attain the higher education.

Some of the challenges facing the management of higher education include:

a) Universities are faced with inadequate capacity to cater for the growing demand for education.

The available spaces for accommodating students cannot be enough to cater for all students who are supposed to be enrolled in the education system.

b) There is a mismatch between the skills acquired by the university graduates and the demand of the industry. This eventually leads to graduates missing jobs or failing to get a job in the relevant fields and some even end up unemployed. The employees sometimes require certain skills and knowledge that the graduates might not have acquired through the education system.

c) There is an imbalance between the number of students pursuing science based courses and art based courses. Majority of students pursue arts based courses as compared to those who pursue science based courses.

d) Universities have been accused of rigid administration criteria that do not allow credit transfer between universities and other post secondary institutions. This has further made education in the higher levels seem like is locked within its boundaries.

e) There are some discrepancies in public universities based on gender and regions of origin. To a greater extent, higher education has been criticized as being biased to females and sometimes to people of particular backgrounds. The curriculum taught in the universities is sometimes not open to accommodate all those who wish to pursue higher education.

These challenges have far much affected the access and realization of higher education to most Kenyans who have been trying to work hard in the in lower levels with motivation that they will transit to the higher level.

The number of students in Kenya's universities is soaring, up 28% in 2014 compared to 2013. But, contrary to expectations, the government has cut funding by 6% for the upcoming fiscal year, adjusting its higher education spending to US\$588 million compared to the US\$627.2 million allotted in 2014/15.

The funding cuts will make it difficult for universities to cater to the growing numbers of students taking courses, and they will necessitate strategies to secure funds from alternative sources.

Universities will also be challenged by the directive from Kenya's Commission for University Education (CUE) to stop offering diploma and certificate courses by July 2015. These courses have become more common in Kenyan universities both because of increasing student numbers and because they are good sources of revenue, and they are often the result of collaboration between universities and more commercially oriented colleges. The CUE order, which requires that such courses be offered only by colleges and technical institutes in the future, will effectively eliminate this source of revenue for universities.

In other words, the country's universities are faced with both decreased government subsidies and the removal of an important alternate source of funding.

Integral to the CUE decision to require universities to cease offering diplomas and certificates is an attempt to increase the quality of education offered in Kenya's universities. The argument has been that offering these courses is "outside of the core function" of universities, and that students interested in them would be better suited to technical colleges. By requiring such students to attend technical institutes, the hope is for more places to be opened up for students to pursue university degrees.

Also underlying the CUE decision is a sense that universities have become too focused on revenue generation – to the detriment of quality. President Uhuru Kenyatta met with chancellors from public universities this May and said:

"Higher education is growing at an incredible pace. This is not only because of demand but because of the pace of development. Kenyan Universities must make sure they maintain a healthy balance between quality and quantity."

However, at the same time, he reportedly agreed with the attending chancellors that there was a "need to allocate more resources to public universities to boost research and innovation." The recently announced funding cuts, needless to say, are at odds with this goal.

In brighter news, despite the cuts to universities' core funding, students will have better access to financial aid in 2015/16. The Higher Education Loans Board (HELB) will receive US\$83 million under the new budget, up from the current US\$63 million and representing a 33% increase.

Other Problems facing the Kenyan higher education system

In a paper called Higher education as an instrument of economic growth in Kenya, Josiah Nyangau summarises the challenges currently facing the country's higher education system:

- "Massification;
- Overcrowding;
- Ever-growing demand;
- Erosion of the non-university sub-sector due to acquisitions and takeovers by public universities in search of space;
- Insufficient/declining public funding;
- Curricula that are not responsive to modern-day needs of the labour market;
- Declining quality;
- Lack of basic laboratory supplies and equipment;
- Crumbling infrastructure;
- Poorly equipped/stocked libraries;

- Poor governance;
- Rigid management structures.”

Mr Nyangau considers massification – which he defines as “the transformation of previously elite systems of higher education to mass systems of higher education as participation in postsecondary education expands dramatically” – to be the most fundamental issue facing Kenya’s higher education system.

The latest Kenyan government data shows that public and private universities in the country combined enrolled 443,783 students in 2014. This compares to 2013’s 361,379 students and is more than double the enrolment of 2012.

Against that dramatic growth, Mr Nyangau adds, “Although there have been efforts over the years to expand the public higher education system, rapid and sustained double-digit growth in demand has consistently outpaced supply.”

There are ten more universities in Kenya than there were four years ago (68 compared to 58), including public and private institutions. Though the number of public universities tripled in 2013 (from seven to 22) after the government upgraded 15 university colleges into fully-fledged universities to meet rising demand, the private sector is also robust since even that increase cannot accommodate enough students.

The cuts to public universities, along with the direction to ban them from offering diploma and certificate programmes, may spur the further expansion of private institutions to accommodate demand.

Hopes to extend higher education to have-not counties

The tragic attacks on Kenyan students earlier in the year 2015 at Garissa University by Al-Shabaab militants focused the world’s attention on Kenya, and to the threats Kenyan students face in some regions if they pursue “University” education. They also highlighted the huge divides in the country between certain regions – with the northeast region having (in some cases) more trade and ethnic ties to Somalia, as well as sub-standard government services, including education.

The UN Development Index considers Kenya to be the second most “unequal” country in East Africa, after Rwanda. And increasingly, there are fears that this inequality will stoke growing numbers of Kenya’s dissatisfied and often unemployed youth to radicalisation, and even violence. Yusuf Hassan, the Member of Parliament for Nairobi’s Kamukunji Constituency, an electoral voting area in the capital region, said:

“The unemployment crisis is a ticking bomb. Over 60% of the population is under 25. You cannot ignore that. A huge and significant population is restless. And the gap between the rich and poor is getting wider.”

There are some counties in Kenya that do not have a university (Garissa University is the only university college in the north corridor of Kenya, and it was closed after the April 2015 attack even though reopen later in the year 2016).

To try to extend education more deeply through the country, there is a proposal being debated in the Kenyan Senate, Universities Bill 2014, which calls for 20 new universities to be created so that each county will have a centre of research and higher learning.

As much as this is part of a wider plan initiated in 2013 to “devolve” government so that individual counties in Kenya become self-sustaining, the passing of the bill may be imperiled by the pending budget cuts. In addition, the government is faced with the need to increase educational access to its marginalised northern population, alongside the fact that many students and teachers in the region are terrified of further attacks.

Expanding and improving the system under such circumstances is, to say the least, a tremendous challenge that would be daunting for any government. And yet the burgeoning demand for higher education in Kenya will no doubt mean that improving the country’s higher education system will remain a focus for national and state governments for years to come. (Governments and educators in Kenya struggling to keep pace with demand for higher education <http://monitor.icef.com/2015/06/governments-and-educators-in-kenya-struggling-to-keep-pace-with-demand-for-higher-education/> 4/4/2017)

Bedah Mengo 2011 wrote on November 14, The ongoing lecturers strike in Kenya, which has disrupted learning and led to closure of several universities, point to a bigger crisis in the higher education sector in the East African country. Three universities, Egerton, Moi and Masinde Muliro, have been shut down due to paralysis occasioned by the industrial action that entered its seventh day on Monday.

In the other four universities, students were on their own with the administration, in some universities, coming up with measures to ensure they do their examinations to complete the semester.

And as the crisis bites, educationists were urging the government to seize the opportunity and solve problems bedeviling universities, both private and public, which run beyond salary disputes. Of great concern was over-enrolment, which has led to congestion in most varsities and an aggressive expansion program, which has seen the elevation of several middle-level colleges into university constituent colleges.

The two factors, although they have enhanced access to university education, have led to massive shortage of lecturers. In year 2010 a survey by Kenya's Commission for Higher Education (CHE) noted that there was an acute shortage of lecturers in universities, in particular, professors. The body said Kenya had a paltry 352 professors only.

CHE noted that only a handful of the dons were teaching at universities, with the majority seeking greener pastures in the government as technocrats and in the private sector. The shortage of staff in the universities has led to overworking of lecturers. Most of them end up working on weekends, evenings and university vacations. They barely have anytime for research.

In some faculties such as education, science and arts, there are as many as 2,500 students during lectures. "Most times during education lectures, students stand on the verandah listening to the lecturer through the public address system. You can barely see inside the lecture halls because the rooms are full, " said Christine Nekesa on Monday, a Bachelor of Education student at Kenyatta University in the capital city Nairobi.

She noted that since the term began, they have done two continuous assessment tests but they have not gotten their scripts back. There are about 2,000 students in the history of education class. It is practically impossible for the lecturer to mark all the scripts and return them. This I believe it applies also to exam papers. Most students end up getting marks they do not deserve," she said.

To address staff shortage, most universities have employed part- time lecturers most of whom have master's degree or have just completed their undergraduate. The lecturers make more than half the staff in most universities, both public and private. They have no time to research nor publish because of the huge number of students they handle and they also teach in more than one institution.

The rise in the number of students has resulted from improved access to primary and secondary education, which the government is funding. Besides overcrowding and inadequate lecturers, the increase in demand for higher education has also led to mushrooming of universities.

The last seven years (before 2011) has seen the number of private universities rise from 17 to 30 and public from five to seven. But this has come with downsides. The quality of learning has deteriorated, with many universities, according to CHE offering courses that are not accredited.

In its 2010 report, the commission noted thousands of students had enrolled in courses that have not been accredited and will, therefore, not be recognized as having proper qualification. CUE are investigating cases where some universities are starting programs first, then filing applications with the commission for accreditation, which is wrong," said Professor Everett Standa, the then CHE director.

The failure to offer accredited courses has put on collision many universities with professional bodies, which have refused to recognize graduates putting careers on the line. The Engineers Registration Board, for instance, had declined to recognize graduates from Egerton, Masinde Muliro and Kenyatta, leading public universities.

This is the fate that has befallen law, survey, medicine, veterinary and pharmacy graduates who have been rejected by respective professional bodies. Professor Margaret Kamar, the then Kenya's Minister for Higher Education decried falling standards of university education in the country. She had observed that most universities have failed to deliver quality education as they promised when they University of were being given charters.

However, all is not lost as Kenya experiences challenges in its university education. To improve university education, Kenya's government increased its funding to public universities. It rose from 259 million U.S. dollars to 287 million dollars in the financial year 2011/2012.

Kenya has also committed 595 million dollars for the setting up of the National Open University, a postgraduate training and research institution that will enable more students to pursue their degrees through online learning thus reduce congestion in universities.

(<http://monitor.icef.com/2017/02/kenya-cracks-down-in-sweeping-review-of-higher-education-quality> 22 May 2017)

Kenya cracks down in sweeping review of higher education quality 21 Feb 2017

Short on time? Here are the highlights:

- The Government of Kenya is continuing this year with reforms designed to address persistent quality issues in the country's higher education system
- Most recently, it conducted a quality audit of all public and private universities, which found widespread problems with admissions and graduation controls throughout Kenyan institutions
- In the wake of the audit, a number of programmes have already been suspended, there are expectations that as-yet-unknown number of degrees will be recalled, and a government commission has reportedly recommended the closure of three institutions

A sweeping audit of Kenyan universities has found widespread issues with respect to student admissions, progression, and the awarding of degrees and certificates. Carried out by the Kenyan Commission for University Education (CUE) last month, and ordered by Education Cabinet Secretary Fred Matiang'i, the audit has cast doubt on more than 100,000 degrees issued by the country's universities since 2012.

The final audit report, released by CUE on 16 February 2017, has immediately kicked off further reforms designed to address long-standing quality issues in Kenya's rapidly expanding higher education sector. The immediate steps taken by government officials include:

- A suspension of so-called "school-based programmes," a stream of degree study targeted to primary and secondary school teachers through which such students are found to have been engaged in university studies for as little as six-to-nine University of Abelaideeks per year. Universities have been directed to close such programmes, or to convert them to part-time degree options.
- A suspension of executive degree programmes, particularly Executive Master of Business Administration degrees, with the prospect that previous graduates of such programmes may have their qualifications recalled.
- CUE has also tightened university admissions requirements so that students with weaker secondary school records, or those applying on the strength of university bridging programmes or with foreign credentials, may no longer be admitted.

The report details a host of questionable practices among Kenyan institutions, including the delivery of unaccredited programmes, poor admissions procedures that open the door to the admission of unqualified students and/or the use of fraudulent credentials, poor attendance and performance tracking, and the graduation of students who had not met degree requirements.

Cabinet Secretary of Education Dr. Matiang'i cautioned afterward that Kenyans should not expect a mass recall of university degrees. Ho University of Abelaidever, the nation's universities have been given a six-month window to comply with government quality requirements, and, more immediately, CUE has sent a separate audit report to each audited institution with a demand for a rapid response. "Each university must submit corrections of factual errors they may find in their individual audit report within seven days. In addition, each university is required to submit its corrective actions to the commission within 30 days," CUE Chairperson Chacha Nyaigotti-Chacha said.

Even so, the audit may lead to some immediate closures of some universities, with reports that CUE has recommended the ministry take steps to wind up three institutions immediately. This follows the CUE-recommended closure or sanction of a number of other Kenyan universities in recent years, including Ignorer University, Barack Obama University, and Kenco University.

Money troubles

Meanwhile, a separate auditor-general's report has determined that eleven Kenyan universities are essentially insolvent and unable to meet their financial obligations. They include the country's Flagship University of Nairobi along with Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture

and Technology, University of Eldoret, Technical University of Kenya, Pwani University, Murang'a University College, Multimedia University of Kenya, Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, Machakos University, Laikipia University, and Embu University College.

The auditor-general finds that operating deficits have now eroded or exceeded the cash reserves of each institution but also points to constrained public funding as the main financial challenge facing the country's higher education sector. In particular, the report highlights, "Inadequate government funding to cater for increased costs in academic programmes, refurbishment of teaching facilities and increase of personal emoluments based on improved terms and conditions of service". Other reports suggest that as many as 21 of 33 public universities in Kenya will operate at a deficit this year.

The cost of growth

All of these findings point to a system under considerable strain to keep pace with the demand for higher education in Kenya. CUE reports that there University of Abelaidere 539,749 students enrolled in the nation's universities in 2016, a nearly 23% increase over the year before and on pace with the dramatic growth in overall enrolment observed since 2012.

Much of that growth in student numbers has been absorbed by Kenya's burgeoning private universities but, as the recent CUE and auditor-general reports attest, institutions of all stripes are struggling.

The quality of higher education in Kenya has been the subject of considerable commentary from the World Bank and other international observers and is also the focus of a growing public debate within the country.

What this means for recruitment

Kenya's outbound student numbers have tailed off in recent years, in part owing to a softening economy and a weakening exchange rate for the Kenyan shilling against major world currencies. However, the outlook is for more robust economic growth in 2017 and a correspondingly better footing for the shilling.

At the same time, Kenya is projected to have one of the fastest-growing college-aged populations in the world over the next decade. The British Council projects that Kenya will have a population of 5.7 million college-aged students by 2024, up from 4.2 million in 2011 – a rate of growth expected to be exceeded only by Nigeria, India, Ethiopia, and Indonesia.

That combination of a growing student pool, improving economic conditions, and persistent quality concerns at home, could as well lead to a greater number of outbound students in the year

ahead. Kenyan students have shown a tendency toward study closer to home – that is, in neighboring East African countries – in the past, but the overarching demand factors here continue to keep Kenya on many recruiters’ list of emerging markets to watch.

Mitigation

The following are some of the mitigation to various challenges facing higher education, they includes;

- Higher education sector requires clear policies of rewarding and retaining talented staff and ways of dealing with the politically instigated expansion. It provides an opportunity for reflection on policies and practices in Kenya’s higher education sector
- Need for urgent reforms. Quality assurance could play a key role in initiating these reforms.
- On financing and improvement of infrastructures: there was need for greater partnership/ corroboration.
- Controlled development of universities in all counties. CUE should ensure they have put in place all control measures to growth and expansion of universities in the country. Set standard evaluation methods for universities.
- University education bursary fund be established and be separated from HELB funds.
- Order and well known universities should be encouraged to open more campuses and branches to all counties in order to control quality and ensuring harmonisation of courses being offered.
- To increase access the county governments should allow international universities to operate in their counties. International investment in university education be encouraged.
- Universities in Kenya should take the advantage increasing college-aged population: As this it is projected Kenya will have one of the fastest-growing college-aged populations in the world over the next decade. The British Council projects that Kenya will have a population of 5.7 million college-aged students by 2024, up from 4.2 million in 2011 – a rate of growth expected to be exceeded only by Nigeria, India, Ethiopia, and Indonesia.

References

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