

Challenges Facing Delivery of Quality Examinations in Young Kenyan Universities

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Growth of Higher Education Sector in Kenya

- Currently, 31 chartered public universities and 6 constituent colleges
- Total number of universities in Kenya are 74
- 9 established in 2011 and chartered between 2015 and 2017
- In these young universities, student populations have generally increased 3-fold since the time of their inception, from an average of 1000 to over 3000 in the last 3 years

Challenges associated with massive growth

- Quality of examination invigilation and supervision leading to weak examination processes
- Lack of infrastructure, academic staff and weak structures

Consequences of weak examination process

- Dished out degrees including PhDs
- Sexually Transmitted Degrees (STDs)
- Exam cheating
- Over-generosity in award of marks
- Missing marks
- Weak professional degrees,
- Plagiarism, etc.

Why the study

- Examinations reflects the candidates ability by isolating weak from strong students,
- Allow for progression to higher academic levels
- Process is hence a very critical area in the Education system
- University Management are often aware of challenges affecting the process but lack data on which to base decisions regarding the process
- **Data-For-Decision making required hence the need for this study**

Objectives of the study

1. Identify the challenges affecting the examination process in a young university
2. Determine the causes of the challenges
3. Propose possible solutions to the causes
4. Identify the responsible stakeholders to deal with the various challenges

Methodology

- Study was conducted at Murang'a University of Technology in December 2016 to January 2017
- University is very young having been established in 2011 and chartered in 2016
- Qualitative survey using a Participatory Research Appraisal (PRA) technique was applied in data collection
- In this method, every academic staff member was involved

Why everybody must be involved

- Robert Chambers (1983) says that the ones who have the information are not the ones at top but the ones at the bottom. He argues that the best research methodology for development is “Participatory Research Appraisal (PRA)”
- It’s a bottom up Approach NOT Top bottom
- Everybody’s views matters



PRA Procedure Applied

1. Stakeholders in the examination process were identified
2. **Ground rules** for participation were agree on such that **everybody had to participate**, there was to be **transparency** and **ownership** of the findings;
3. The aim of the exercise was defined
4. The research objectives of the research were also agree on.
5. The problem (i.e. the main concern) was identified.
6. At the end of the research a Community Action Plan (CAP) was to be developed outlining the responsibilities, roles and time frames for each stakeholder.

Identified key Stakeholders in the examination process

- **DVC (Academic)**
- **Registrar (Academic)**
- **Deputy Registrar, Exams**
- **Deans of Schools**
- **Chairmen of Departments**
- **Exam Coordinators**
- **Director, Quality Assurance**
- **All Lecturers**
- **Director ISO**

Categorization of stakeholders

- Homogenous stakeholder groups were formed based on their interests comprising of the following:
 1. School of Pure and Applied Sciences
 2. School of IT and Engineering
 3. School of Business
 4. School of Hospitality
 5. Administration and exams office

Data Collection

- Stakeholders listed all the problems affecting the examination process in their areas from setting to marking
- Also causes for the problems were identified
- Possible solutions for the various causes were proposed
- Together with stakeholders, identified challenges were clustered into fewer broad categories
- Clustered challenges were then ranked using Pair-wise Ranking Technique

Results

- Participants in each school listed independently the challenges they faced
- Administration of exams had the highest number of challenges listed mainly touching on implementation of examination policies

Issues listed – Cheating/invigilation

a) Cheating

1. Admitting unauthorized materials in exam rooms.
2. Inadequate space
3. Students writing on desks and walls before exam time.
4. Exam leakage

a) Invigilation

1. Allocation of invigilation in multiple rooms
2. Exams start late
3. Failure of lectures and part time lecturers to turn up
4. Lack of adequate number of invigilators sitting for an examination
5. Lack of harmonized procedure on conduct of invigilators in exam room
6. Local arrangement that disrupt invigilation
7. Poor invigilation
8. Poor invigilation and administration.
9. Skipping of exam invigilation

Other issues – Exam Moderation and Timetabling

a) Exam moderation and quality

1. External examiner not reaching the school or department.
2. Failure to implement external examiner recommendations
3. Poor internal and external moderation
4. Lack of instrument for moderation
5. Poor editing of exams
6. Low quality exams
7. Late exam setting
8. Lack of coordination of external examiners,
9. Absence of lecturers during moderation
10. Inadequate lecturers
11. Lack of training of staff in exam setting

d) Timetabling

1. Collision in timetable – no established university timetable,
2. Examination timetable and room allocation challenges
3. Poor room allocation and
4. Lack of documented room capacity,
5. Collision in timetable and poor coordination,
6. Late release of timetable (not adhering to schedule),
7. Lack of zoning of common units

Other issues cont....

d) Exam Administration

1. COD picking exam for the whole department
2. Late exam marking and submission
3. Lack of integrity and security of examinations
4. Late setting of exams due to lack of adhering to schedule
5. Late submission of exams due to overloading
6. Poor departmental structure where exam officer is in charge of a whole school instead of a department
7. Errors in recoding of marks
8. Missing marks
9. Delay in marking and submission of exams
10. Duplication of exams
11. Practical examination issues related to late procurement of items, late delivery, and faulty infrastructure
12. No clear procedure of handling exams
13. Delay in issuing of exam cards
14. Challenges when compensating units which are related and are on different semester within a year
15. Clashing of unit codes due to lack of policy on the same
16. Lack of storage place for marked scripts
17. Room allocation problems
18. Overworked individuals

d) Poor

infrastructure

1. Inadequate space
2. Lack of office infrastructure e.g. printers, photocopiers and computers

Clustering of challenges

The challenges highlighted were then clustered in to five major categories:

1. Low Quality Exams
2. Weak Invigilation
3. Weak Management of Exams
4. Weak Exam Processing
5. Security and integrity of exams

Pair-wise Ranking of challenges

	Exam Quality (EQ)	Invigilation (I)	Exams Admin (EA)	Exam Processing (EP)	Exam integrity (EI)	SCORE	RANK
Exam Quality (EQ)		EQ	EA	EQ	EI	2	3
Invigilation (I)			EA	I	EI	1	4
Exam Admin (EA)				EA	EA	4	1
Exam Processing (EP)					EI	0	5
Exam integrity (EI)						3	2

Pair-wise Ranking Scores & Ranks

Challenge	Abbrev.	Score	Rank
Exam Admin	EA	4	1
Exam Integrity	EI	3	2
Exam Quality	EQ	2	3
Invigilation	I	1	4
Exam processing	EP	0	5

Suggested solutions by the stakeholders

1. Enforce deadlines
2. Exam coordinators be under the CoDs
3. Centralize exam timetabling
4. University provide a multipurpose hall
5. Centralize exam timetabling
6. Centralize exam timetabling
7. Review unit codes
8. Print through ERP
9. Departments take moderation seriously
10. Appoint appropriately qualified external examiners
11. Compulsory pedagogical training
12. Set exam within the timelines
13. Create exam data base and take moderation seriously; disciplinary action on proof

Further suggested solutions by the stakeholders

14. Chief invigilators to pick their exams
15. Centralized timetabling
16. Set timeliness for picking exams from Exam office
17. Stop entry in to exam rooms before exams
18. Provide an exam officer in each Department
19. Timely requisition and procurement
20. Develop moderation instruments;
21. Structure internal moderation
22. Make it compulsory to attend
23. Department be provided with printers and secretaries
24. Install anti-plagiarism soft ware
25. Training on pedagogical skills
26. External examiners present their findings to the Departmental Exam Board
27. Allocate 2 or more invigilators per room
28. Enforcement of examination rules
29. Rooms to be arranged in advance
30. Sensitization; code of conduct be produced

conclusions

1. Young universities are faced with many challenges affecting the examination process, which may have serious ramifications on the delivery of quality exams.
2. Many of these problems can easily be solved with non-monetary strategies by the various heads of sections.
3. The main challenge facing the delivery of quality exams in young university is related to the administration of the exams.
4. Directorate of Quality Assurance has a key role in analyzing data for decision making by the University Managements

Recommendations

1. Directorates for Quality Assurance role for influencing continuous quality improvement in young universities is best achieved by undertaking frequent monitoring and data collection on the challenges facing the examination processes.
2. A participatory approach be always be adopted gathering data in order to assure ownership and effective implementation of the findings.

Thank you for listening