

## An Evaluation of Quality of University Education in Kenya during this Massification Era

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### Abstract

*This paper attempts to explore the impact of mass university education on the quality of university education in Kenya. The study was based on the premise that the ever increasing access and number of private and public universities does not match the resources to afford the students quality education. The study used the following indicators to gauge the quality of university education in Kenya, student lecturer ratio, quality of library services, quality of examination invigilation and cheating rates as well as the level of student support services. The study used quantitative data from some sampled Universities both public and private. The study established that the lecturers' students' ratios were very high in both private and public universities. Public universities were found to be raging behind in e-learning facilities, and the quality of student support services. Cases of examination irregularities were found to be existing in both public and private universities, however the public universities were more overwhelmed due to the larger numbers of students. The study concluded that there is need to match the facilities in our universities with the enrolment ratios if quality of our graduates is to be maintained.*

**Keywords:** Massification, Quality, University, Higher Education

### 1. Introduction

Jowi (2003) notes that massification is the growth of enrolment beyond the capacities of universities. Scotts (1995) used the term massification to describe the development of higher education during the latter part of the twentieth century. In Kenya the last two years have witnessed both an increase in the number of chartered universities as well as the number of students enrolling in them. Massification is the steady increase in the students' enrolments without the compounding increase in budgetary allocations and investment in facilities and academic staff leading to a mismatch between quality and quantity.

Cheng and Tam (1997) observe that quality of university education is a function of input, process and output of the system. According to Johnes and Taylor (1990) universities are evaluated using the following indicators:

1. The output the universities aim to produce
2. The input which the universities need to produce these outputs.
3. The quantitative measurement of each university's input and outputs.

Ownour (2010) posits that in many of the Kenyan universities the following were common, lecturers teaching up to 36 hours per week, lecturers having no offices, overcrowded lecture rooms, less contact hours for school based students and limited library facilities. A Delphi survey (2010) established that quality is a misnomer in the Kenyan university education. It does not exist. Universities have just been turned into production lines where they are biting more than they can chew. Wangenge-Ouma (2007) notes that the following needs to be looked at if massification has to be followed by quality university education in Kenya. Expansion of infrastructure and facilities, recruitment of qualified staff, establishing external quality assurance to ensure greater accountability.

According to Mwiria and Nyukuri (1994) student's double intakes tends to relax the criteria for both new staff recruitment and promotion of those already working at the institutions. Ngolovai (2006) argued that the increased work load could be affecting the quality of university education. Odebero (2010) noted that heavy workloads have forced universities in Kenya to develop survival mechanisms which are:

1. Assigning graduate assistants and tutorial fellows full teaching responsibilities such that they teach both junior and senior classes.

2. Assigning junior staff advisory responsibilities yet they require more advice themselves.
3. Taking masters by project which is less rigorous compared to thesis.
4. Appointing supervisors from other disciplines where they have no basis on content.
5. In private universities lecturers are assigned teaching units outside their core competencies.

Shortage of facilities in the Kenyan public universities is well documented. World Bank (2000) and Cheboi (2006) observed that shortage of facilities affected the quality of university education. They also noted that the quantity and quality of teaching and learning particularly information technology impacts positively on the quality of research and teaching. Okwakol (2008) posited that computers are increasingly becoming a major note book, textbook, dictionary and storage facility for students in institutions of higher education. Study by Ndethiu (2007) at Kenyatta University established that inadequate reading resources posed a challenge to the promotion of students reading habits. Munyasi (2010) established that public universities in Kenya lacked adequate technology to give students access to current information sources. Embeywa (2013) notes that university staff require induction on student mentorship at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. This means that massification may lead to the production of many poorly mentored graduates.

## 2. Methodology

This paper used secondary quantitative data to analyse the effects of massification as well as primary quantitative data that was collected from students from both public and private universities. The Secondary data was suitable because it was readily available and was highly reliable and all that was required was to subject it to statistical analysis in order to arrive at the emerging patterns. Primary data was collected by use of questionnaires to because they give information about the status of university facilities and services which can be used to gauge the quality of mass education offered in Kenyan universities.

## 3. Discussions and Results

### 3.1 Qualification of teaching staffing staff in the universities

Data from commission for higher education 2011 shows the composition of the teaching staff in the public universities

Name of University	No of Doctorate	%	No of Master & Below	%
Nairobi	673	46	798	54
5Moi	290	37	488	63
Kenyatta	244	30	575	70
Egerton	142	39	221	61
JKUAT	210	38	343	62
Maseno	222	32	479	68
Masinde Muriro	74	25	223	75
<b>Total</b>	<b>1855</b>	<b>37.2</b>	<b>3127</b>	<b>62.8</b>

The results show that in all the sampled universities the number of lecturers with doctorate degrees in our public universities averages at 37.6% compared to those with masters and below a woofing 62.8%. The university of Nairobi is the only university with nearly half of its lecturers with doctorate degrees at 46% while Maside muriro has the least number of PhD holders with only 25%. The situation is even worse now because some of these PhD holders have moved into the newly chartered universities and private universities.

### 3.2 Staff student Ratio

The commission for higher education (2010) recommends that for quality university education to be achieved in Kenya, universities should have the lecturer student ratios as follows

Programme Lecturer:	Student Ratio
Applied Science	1:10
Social Sciences and Education	1:18
Medical and Allied Sciences	1:7

Data from a study by Gudo Olel and Oanda (2011) revealed the following lecturer students ratios in various programmes in some sampled public and private universities

### 3.3 Education and social Sciences

Name of University	Category	Lecturer Student Ratio	%	% deficiency
Nairobi	Public	1:92.34	513	413
Masinde Muriro	Public	1:52.83	293.5	193.5
Kenyatta	Public	1:59	327.7	227.7
USIU	Private	1:52.83	293.5	193.5
Baraton	Private	1:32.31	179.5	79.5

The results reveal that the ratios in both education and social sciences programmes are high. The public universities had very high ratios as compared to private universities.

### 3.4 Health and Allied Sciences

Name of University	Category	Lecturer Student Ratio	%	% deficiency
Nairobi	Public	1:10.24	146.3	46.3
Kenyatta	Public	1:26	371	271
Baraton	Private	1:21.77	311	211

In the medical studies Kenyatta and Baraton seem to be having very high lecturer student ratios. The shortfall at the medical school at the University of Nairobi is minimal at 46.3%. The high ratios tell of limited individualized attention to the students hence compromising quality.

### 3.5 Engineering and Technology

Name of University	Category	Lecturer Student Ratio	%	% deficiency
Nairobi	Public	1:26	260	160
Masinde Muriro	Public	1:16	160	60
Kenyatta	Public	1:154	1540	1440
Baraton	Private	1:9.45	94.5	-5.5

All the three public universities under review had high ratios in the applied sciences like engineering with Kenyatta University having very high ratios. Baraton seems to be doing well in the area of applied science and technology with a lecturer ratio 1:9.45. Massification and Quality of University Examinations Students views were sought regarding the quality of university examinations in the following areas, quality of invigilation, levels of cheating, students using sex for grades. The findings are as follows:

### 3.6 Satisfied with the quality of invigilation and supervision of exams

Name of university	Category	% of satisfied students
Chuka	Public	42.3
Meru	Public	44.7
Nairobi	Public	38.6
Multi Media	Public	48.2
Mt. Kenya	Private	70.2
Nazarene	Private	82.3
Methodist	Private	76.3

The results reveal that private university students are more satisfied with the level of examination invigilation than their counterparts from the public universities. The lower quality of supervision and invigilation in public universities can be attributed to the large class sizes.

### 3.7 Cases of examination cheating

Name of university	Category	% cheating cases in exams
Chuka	Public	24.3
Meru	Public	26.4
Nairobi	Public	31.2
Multi Media	Public	22.7
Mt. Kenya	Private	22.1
Nazarene	Private	16.8
Methodist	Private	18.1

Cheating cases seems to be higher in public universities mainly due to massification of students numbers as well as what Gudo, Olel and Oanda (2011) noted was grades for sex which was high among the students in public universities. The lower levels of cheating in private universities are mainly due to strict time schedules and invigilation procedures adopted by private universities.

### 3.8 Use of Digital library resources

Name of university	Category	Quality of Digital library Resources
Chuka	Public	48.7
Meru	Public	51.4
Nairobi	Public	61.6
Multi Media	Public	72.7
Mt. Kenya	Private	62.1
Nazarene	Private	78.7
Methodist	Private	78.1

The results reveal that students in private universities are more satisfied with the quality of digital books and journals at their disposal while their counterparts in public universities seem to have lower access which can be attributed to low levels of investment in ICT and the fact that most students in the public universities are more and many of them do not have personal laptops hence cannot access internet at all times. This confirms the literature that was reviewed that suggested that public universities in Kenya lag behind in technology adoption which threatens quality in this mass education era. The students' level of satisfaction with the quality of support facilities offered to them by their universities was sought:

Name of university	% Counselling Services	% sporting facilities	% Health facilities
Chuka	39.5	40.1	38.3
Meru	38.2	38.1	32.6
Nairobi	46.8	48.1	48.7
Multi Media	47.9	47.3	44.9
Mt. Kenya	63.3	68.3	60.3
Nazarene	70.2	65.2	63.8
Methodist	67.8	66.1	65.7

The level of students support facilities in both public and private universities is far from being adequate with the increased students' enrolments. The private universities seem to be doing well in providing their student with all the support services under review as compared to the public universities whose quality levels are below 50%. Even then these services are not serving all students effectively as shown with the percentages of about 65% in the private universities. These findings are similar to Standa (2000) and Kokul (2010) who found out that guidance and counselling services in public universities were ineffective. Ineffective guidance and counselling services was a hindrance to effective teaching and learning in public universities as such inefficiencies lead to students' unrest and other unsocial behaviours among students.

#### 4. Conclusion

The study concluded that the students' lecturer ratios are low hence compromising standards. The situation was worse in the public universities due to the high number of self sponsored students that enroll in addition to the government sponsored students. The quality of university examination invigilation was found to be more wanting in the public universities and there were the cases of students cheating in the examinations. The private universities were endowed in terms of use of digital libraries which is good in this technology focused era. However some have limited library space for effective reading. Students support services like sporting, health and counseling services seem to be more wanting in the public universities as compared to their private university counterparts. Generally the universities need to address the above issues if quality education can be achieved as they embark on mass enrolment. They particularly need to.

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