The Challenges of Infusing Total Quality Management in Kenyan Public University System

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Personal Biography

My name is Nickson Moseti Ongaki. I am a Kenyan young academician who has made significant contributions to the studies of human resource management and business administration. I was born in Kisii highlands in 1982. I remained there as I grew up and was educated in public schools. In high school I made several outstanding innovations and inventions that I managed to present during Science Congress to national levelI decided to seek academic careers, against my family's wishes. Both went on to attend Moi University, pursued a career in academics, ultimately becoming a banker, and teacher. I initially sought a bachelor's degree in education. Later, I decided to become an entrepreneur. After graduation in 2005, I attended summer school and took a masters course in Business Administration. I enrolled at the Jomo Kenyatta University of science, Agriculture and technology as a PHD student. I became a part time lecturer at Mount Kenya University after receiving my master degree. I described myself as being self-conscious, inarticulate, and innovative in my classes.I'm proud to say this new role suits me. I'm driven, not to do great things for myself, but to spur my society on to even greater ones.I am married to Faith Wavinya; we have 2 children, Linnah and Amma.

Abstract

Today, the world's workplace is becoming increasingly geographically fluid across national, regional and international borders due to economic globalization and the development of advanced communications and information technologies. In this context, knowledge has emerged as an economic commodity which has in turn placed pressure on existing national systems to ensure they are placed competitively in the international marketplace. Therefore, qualitative higher education is especially acknowledged as a vital driving force for the socioeconomic growth and technological development of nations. There is currently a strong move throughout developed countries towards having rigorous, internationally recognized higher education quality assurance processes. Many countries have taken steps to establish mechanisms for quality assurance in higher education. According to Whitely (2001), quality assurance in education has become an all-embracing concept that includes all policies, processes and actions through which the quality of education provided is developed and maintained. For the Kenyan University to fulfill its mission, it must devise ways of reversing the downward spiral in the quality of knowledge it produces and the services it delivers to its stakeholders and society at large. It must rediscover ways of achieving quality and sustaining it. This therefore, is the epicenter of this paper. It will examine the concept of quality assurance, its scope and the factors militating against quality assurance within Kenya's public university landscape. Suggestions are put across as a way forward and recommend adoption of Total Quality Management approach

as one of a comprehensive strategy to address the challenges of ensuring provision of quality higher education in the country.

KEY WORDS:
University; National Systems; Total Quality Management; Policies and Technology

Introduction

The organizers of this conference, presumably, are aware and concerned about the emergent issues in our society, the majority of which are quite disturbing and threatening to the corporate existence of this great nation of ours. Their attention must have been drawn to the prevailing needs of the society and would like to use educational forum to change the societal focus. One of such critical issues revolves around the question of quality of education offered in the country's public universities.

Quality has been a recurring decimal and the pivot around which contemporary reforms in education are being undertaken. In fact, a review of educational reforms from the time of Plato to date suggests that the search for quality has consistently dictated the rationale for educational reforms (UNESCO, 2006). Quality as defined by the International Organization of Standardization (1994) is the totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy stated needs. The current concept of quality assurance has been perceived as that of providing a distinctive, special or even exclusive product or service, to meeting or conforming to predetermined specifications or standard, to value for money or to fitness of purpose. It is a concept borrowed from the manufacturing industry first used in the industry as a proof that a product met acclaimed quality. It is therefore a judgmental concept, which helps consumers to differentiate one product from another. It is relatively a new concept of emphasis in Western European countries. Dill (1995) stated that quality assurance is the concern that accepted criteria of minimum standard of quality should be achieved in the production of goods and services. This means ensuring that certain techniques and procedures are in place in order to guarantee the quality of products. Every product of an industry is a function of a variety of activities assumed to have a value added effect on the initial input.

According to Burt (1999), quality assurance is about effectiveness in a process. The focus therefore on the side of industry is the training of employees to prevent problems, strengthening organizational systems and continually improving performance (EISB, 2005). Bolstered upon this industrialization supposition recent global transformation has seen the concept gain relevance in education. The Quality of education has become one of the central issues accorded priority in the recent educational changes going on worldwide, and quality assurance has become one of the mechanisms used in achieving it. The need to assess quality in educational provision is now generally accepted as one of the tools of educational reforms. Concern has always revolved around the ability of educational institutions to meet the needs of the users of manpower in relation to the quality of skills acquired by their products, that is, students. The increasingly popular global trend towards quality assurance has considerably shaped educational policies and academic planning of educational institutions throughout the world. There is the general feeling that the quality of education imparted with curricula that are limited to parochial concerns may no longer be adequate in the face of prevailing global situation. The advent of globalization has made education to be among tradable goods across borders. Thus, this new phenomenon requires the imposition of safeguards to maintain the worth of education provided nationally and across borders. In other words with education being one of the key commodities in the global market, there is a critical need to ensure that higher education systems nationally and regionally are harmonized and conform to international quality assurance benchmark. Kenya's Vision 2030 blue print affirms that the second immediate challenge facing the education sector in the country's transformation to 2030 is how to ensure that the education provided meets high quality standards, and that its contents are relevant to the needs of the economy and society. In line with this, Dalby (1978:2) of Essien, (1993:4) rightly states that:

"Education which leads to the alienation of the child from his ancestral environment cannot be

right nor can it achieve the most important aim of education which consists of developing the powers and character of the child."

Therefore, Quality assurance should be seen to be total, holistic process, concerned with ensuring the integrity of outcomes which is directed toward education as an entity. It is the meeting or conforming to generally accepted standards as defined by quality assurance bodies or appropriate academic and professional committees (Hayward, 2006). As a function of production it entails the supplier and consumer and the various activities put in place to produce quality products and services (Mkpandiok 2007).This notion is supported by Whitely (2001), who argues that quality assurance in education has become an all-embracing concept that includes all policies, processes and actions through which the quality of education provided is developed and maintained. Burt (1999) contends that while quality is really about what, quality assurance is about how. To compound this assertion, both Cheng and Tam, (1997), see quality of education as "a set of elements that the input, process and output of the education system provides that completely satisfy both internal and external strategic constituencies by meeting their explicit and implicit expectations" .

Development of Quality Assurance in Kenyan Public University System

The subject of quality assurance in higher education in Kenya cannot be meaningfully addressed outside the context of the development of higher educational institutions. The first higher education training institution established in Kenya was the Royal Technical College, which was opened in 1956 as a constituent college of the University of East Africa to help in the production of middle level technicians, local leaders, professionals and technocrats in the newly emerging nation- state Kenya. In 1961, the college was renamed the University College of Nairobi. Through an Act of parliament the University College became the University of Nairobi in 1970, thereby becoming the country's first fully fledged university. Moi University was established as the second university in 1983 while Kenyatta University College, then a constituent college of

University of Nairobi became the third university through an Act of Parliament in 1985. Egerton, another constituent college of Nairobi also became a university in 1987.

The rapid expansion in demand for education in Kenya after the attainment of political independence in 1963 can be ascribed to a number of factors. According to Ayot (1992) and Sifuna, (1990), the Social Demand Approach holds that the society demanded for increased educational opportunities at all levels out of the perception that education could serve as a medium for socio-economic advancement. This saw enrolment in the four public universities increase steadily to about 20,000 students by 1989/90. With the 1990 intake of 21,450 student population doubled to a total of 41,000. The findings of Kamunge Report, (1988) pointed out that the Government could no longer adequately finance all levels of education and consequently recommended cost-sharing at different levels of education. The introduction of the Module II programmes variously known as Parallel programme or Privately-sponsored Students' Programme (PSSP) seemed to offer solution to the question of cost; however issues of quality have emerged to be a thorny issue in the programme. With the government no longer able to cope with the ever increasing demand for more University places or even to provide the adequate resources required strengthening partnerships with the private sector; has seen the rapid growth in the number of private universities in the country. By 2008, out of the 28 legally recognized universities in Kenya, 7 were public while 21 were private universities. Of these 21, two were chartered, 4 were registered while the remaining 6 had letters of interim authority (Ministry of Education, 2008). In educational institutions in Kenya, the Teacher-Student ratio ideally should be 1:40. However, the current ratio in public universities is up to 1:700. Therefore, having individualized teaching has become close to impossible. The increasing number of universities and the rapidly rising student population with a steeply rising student academic staff ratio coupled with declining resources have impacted negatively on the University system. Hence, ensuring quality of University education in has really become a source of concern to all stakeholders in education. According to Republic of Kenya (2007:77), the

demand for increased admission without expanding the universities resource base has been perceived by many stakeholders to have led to a significant decline in the quality of university education in the country. The impact this trend has had on quality of university education has been devastating. The University system can be said to have grown from infancy through adolescence to near maturity and finally to decay all within a space of short-time. In fact what Kayode (2000), says of the Nigerian university can as well apply to the Kenyan university scene, i.e.

"Today, things are no longer the same in Nigerian universities, as quality of university education seems to be under serious threat. Experience has shown that the "hotel" accommodation of those days has now become overcrowded hostel where a room meant for two is shared by up to six. But, even this crowded facility is for the lucky few. The classrooms are overflowing with students and tutorial classes are out of the question"

The other problems that have had an appalling impact on the quality status of university system in Kenya include examination malpractices, sexual harassment, and lack of grants for research to mention but a few.

The Scope of Quality Assurance

A systematic and consistent quality assurance system helps to establish an institution's good reputation and image. It includes defined standards of achievement, documented procedures for all identified process, established ways of responding to issues and clear accountability for outcomes. The result is greater public confidence, more satisfied students, efficient processes and staff who are confident in their jobs. Students are more likely to experience better quality instructions, learning materials and interactions with the institution and its staff, leading to enhanced learning outcomes. Middlehurst (2001) describe the scope of quality assurance as including the following dimensions:

- *Regulation (legal frameworks, governance, responsibilities and accountabilities etc)*
- *Educational process (admissions, registration or enrolment, curriculum design and delivery, support for leaving, assessment etc)*
- *Curriculum design and content (validation and approval frameworks, levels and standards etc).*
- *Learning experience (consumer protection, students experience, complaints and appeals etc).*
- *Outcomes (qualifications, certificates, transcripts, security, transferability, recognition/ currency and value etc).*

In summary, Middlehurst sees quality as a grade of achievement, a standard against which to judge others. In the same vein, UNESCO (2006) says quality in higher education is multidimensional and embraces all functions and activities of a university including teaching, academic programmes, research and scholarship, staffing, students, buildings, facilities, equipment, services to the community and the academic environment.

The quality of university graduates, according to Uvah (2005) could be measured by how well they have been prepared for life and for service to society in various spheres of human endeavor. Quality may also be considered on the basis of how good and efficient the teachers are; how adequate and accessible the facilities and materials needed for effective teaching and learning are; and how prepared the graduates are for meeting the challenges of life and for solving the societal problems. Thus, quality assurance is the guarantee of confidence and certainty by a programme of study given by an institution that standards and quality are being maintained and enhanced" (ESIB, 2005).By this conceptual understanding, it can be said that the emphasis on quality assurance is the training of personnel to enhance their performance in work places.

According to the Inter-University Council for East Africa (ICUEA), ten features that constitute quality of a programme include:

- *Curriculum content, design, implementation & learning strategies.*
- *Teaching & management staff*
- *Students admitted into the programmes.*
- *Staff/ Student ratio.*
- *Student assessment procedures.*
- *Physical facilities and infrastructure.*
- *Internal quality assurance system.*
- *Student support programmes.*
- *Staff development activities.*
- *Stakeholder satisfaction.*

What are the Challenges facing quality assurance in Kenya Public Universities.

Stakeholders (government, the labour market (employers), students, parents and the society at large) do complain about the output of Kenyan universities that graduate from public universities are poorly prepared for work. Many graduates are being viewed as half-baked. It is considered expedient here to critically X-ray some of the major factors militating against quality assurance in Kenyan public universities.

The students

In industry, product quality to a certain extent depends on the quality of raw materials input. Quality leather, all other variables being favorable would invariably lead to quality shoes. In university education, the quality of student input is crucial to their eventual outcome. Prime here is what knowledge and abilities do these students already possess prior to joining the university. In support of this Bereday (1973: 34) concludes,

…there is a steady and stable relationship between the output of the secondary schools and the intake of the university. The quality of learners in the terminal class in the former seems directly correlated with the end result of the higher education system. Therefore the value of graduates of secondary-school system is a benchmark in the real selective mechanism for higher education admissions.

Some assumptions are made regarding when students are admitted to universities. We assume they had learned what they were supposed to learn at the lower levels of educational structure. If they did not and somehow cheated their way into the universities, the deficiencies will persist and eventually manifest in them as low quality products. The issue of cheating in national examinations in Kenya is not new in both primary and secondary schools. During the year 2004, according to the Minister for Education, some 1,739 candidates from 107 schools had their examination results cancelled for cheating. Out of this, 1,167 were found to have colluded with each other, 134 were caught with unauthorized information during examination and another 16 were found impersonating. It is of essence to note

that a university does not perform miracles. If the society offers defective raw materials, it can only at best ameliorate the effects at the output end of the processes. To assure quality in student output by the universities, the primary and secondary levels of the system must also ensure quality in their productivity. Examination malpractices often reported at KCSE level have often posed great challenge to the authenticity of the scores attained by the candidates. As to whether these students are adequately prepared to measure to the heavy university programs has also been much of a concern. A number of issues have been raised regarding some aspects of the parallel programme. Key among these centers around qualifications of students admitted into these programs.

Enrolment Explosion

This has become a common feature in the Kenyan universities. As a result many of the facilities on ground are being overstretched. This is a development that surely affects the quality of university education in the country, since excess enrolment usually leads to overcrowded classrooms, ineffective teaching and examination malpractices. With the radical increase in student enrolment that were not matched with corresponding improvement in facilities and funding, the existing facilities are not only over-stretched but ill maintained as well. They can no longer support the programmes of the universities leading to improvisation that have affected quality, a kind of vicious circle trend. The enrolment in the entire University sector in Kenya rose from 59,193 in 2000/2001 to 91,541 in 2004/2005. (CHE, 2009).This increase has precipitated crises in public universities which include inability of the institutions to contain pressures for enrollment expansion, adverse operating conditions like overcrowding, lack of resources, deteriorating physical facilities, deterioration of the quality of teaching and research and lack of resources.

Poor Management

The way and manner some of the Kenyan universities are being managed by the university administrators is also one of the factors militating against quality assurance in Kenyan universities. For most of the public universities in the country management has meant little more than playing

the role of "Caretaker". This vital function has been largely reduced to the maintenance of the status quo. The World Bank (1996) expresses its concern on management and institutional leadership which determine good governance and achievement of institutional objectives. More Often than not the management of public universities has been aggravated by appointment of lecturers to administrative posts without prior training in management and often times there is no one to direct them on what is expected of them which exposes them to ad hoc management. Furthermore,Mwiria (2007; GOK, 2007) points out that;

Higher education in Kenya has had its own challenges in leadership ranging from government interference in appointment of chief executives at least until 2003, weak institutional structures for governance, infringement into academic freedom to low institutional capacities for reforms and innovations .

University Lecturers

Maundu, (1986) found a significant correlation between teacher qualification and pupil performance in various subjects. He attributed high performance to excellent instruction provided by qualified teachers with the support from the institution.

A similar study by Kathuri (1986) established a significant correlation between pupil performance and quality of tutors. Apparently it will be naïve to perceive quality of the tutor per se as an exclusive yardstick in determining performance of a learner. Motivation aspects go beyond such restricted postulations.

Examining the trend in the preliminary years of the development of university education in Kenya, there was seen an orderly and prosperous growth trend. University teaching was elitist as great scholars and teachers from top overseas institutions were part of the teaching pool in the Kenyan universities. The welfare scheme for teachers was attractive and facilities such as books, well equipped laboratories were available to support instructional process. All these combined to enhance sound and quality teaching. The lecturers had integrity both personal and intellectual and the system was always improving them through training programs organized locally and abroad. The financial crunch occasioned by implementation of structural adjustment programs (SAPs) in the late 1980s and the economic crises of the 1990s took its toll on this very crucial resource of the universities. Since the lecturers' morale has plummeted with many fortunate ones migrating to foreign lands where they are more appreciated and remunerated. The Academic Staff Union of Universities have continued to mount pressure on the government through strikes to realistically face reversal of the decay in the higher education system as well as improve the welfare of their members.

When a comparison is made of the university teachers conditions of service in the 1970s and earlier and what it became in the 80s and 90s and even presently, the contrast are dispiriting. In the past, tertiary-level teaching had been characterized by rich, well delivered lectures, practicals, field trips, well-organized tutorials, free handouts to students and students that were well – prepared for examinations. Today the opposite is what is obtained in our tertiary institutions. This has been found to be one of the reasons for examination malpractices that are on the increase in our campuses nowadays. The welfare scheme for teachers was attractive and facilities such as books, well equipped laboratories were available to support instructional process. All these combined to enhance sound and quality teaching. In the 70s, 80s and early 90s a university teacher was better of. He had good furnished accommodation, owned a car and enjoyed an enviable living standard. In the late 1990s, many university teachers had no cars, and those who presently have are starving to maintain them. The universities, feeling demotivated have to engage in auxiliary occupations to survive culminating to duplication of academic programmes and massive expansions of the institutions through proliferation of campuses strewn all over the country. But Warning of this trend Edebe says that the rush by public universities to create more campuses needs to be controlled in order not to compromise quality of education. (Daily Nation, 22nd March 2009).

Currently, the class sizes at universities are too large for lecturers to pay special attention to methodology and therefore the quality of the teacher is compromised (Republic of Kenya, 2005). Moreover the issue of brain drain is

affecting the quality of teaching negatively because institutions are finding it difficult to get a replacement for the highly qualified and experienced staff who are departuring. Many universities in Kenya now find themselves bottom heavy in terms of academic staff mix. This situation is worse in disciplines such as medicine, engineering and the sciences. The rise in student enrolment has not been matched by the growth in the number of teachers available. To cover this deficiency public universities have had to recruit staff from their postgraduate programmes, a risky practice that is causing serious 'in-breeding'. Under this situation quality of teaching suffer a great deal. True there has been a measure of relative improvement in these areas, but the cumulative effects of decades of neglect and brain drain are still being felt.

The Context

If the university has good quality learners and teachers but run irrelevant programmes that do not relate to the needs of the society nor with the "specifications" of the stakeholders and consumers, then quality in this context suffer. The universities are often challenged to design course content that reflect the country's national requirements. There should be no mismatch between what is offered in the universities and what society needs otherwise regardless of the nature of what is offered, it would still in this quality context be of poor quality. There has been proliferation, duplication and repackaging of the same old courses at the universities and every university has sought to showcase its programmes and wrap them up as market-driven and timely. For instance the Daily Nation of March, 2010 reported that;

..... in academic year 2007/2008, the Joint admission Board provided a list of 220 degree choices. That number went up to 273 in the year 2008/2009...

These quests for novelty of course titles has lead to extremes where course content has remained the same old stuff save for the changes in course codes and titles. As a matter of fact concern has been raised as to whether the instructors themselves have the knowledge and skills relevant to the job market, or even whether they are aware of the knowledge and skills needed in the current job market given their long standing experience in teaching and training .This emanates from the fact that, Kenyan graduates from institutions of higher learning have been accused of incompetence and deficiency in vital experience needed in the job market. Furthermore the job market has also been seen as contributing to the demand for mass education whereby the emphasis has been on certificates. This has led to the introduction of module II, open learning, extra-mural/distance learning and school based programs in public universities. Context here must also be aligned with adequate and appropriate materials, and equipment for teaching and learning. Workshops, laboratories, libraries and modern technology like ICT go as required with the context.

Teaching

Teaching is separated here from teachers as a quality indicator because not much teaching goes on in the universities even with highly qualified academic staff in the department. Quality teaching involves not only possession of knowledge but also the ability to transfer knowledge, skills and attitudes to the learners. It would be a matter of public debate as to whether university tutors could be required to undergo training in the methods and techniques of teaching.

While acknowledging that many factors even outside the school (e.g. parents) influence students' achievements as noted by Education for All Global Report (UNESCO, 2005); and Hanushek, (2002). Research has however shown that "the quality of teaching process in classroom has the greatest impact on the performance level of students" (Izumi & Evers, 2002, p. xiii) and is "the key to school improvement" (Welberg, 2002, p. 11). And although the quality of a teaching force cannot be determined solely by the quality of their training, the latter plays significant role in preparing such teachers for the teaching tasks ahead. In Kenyan universities, the noticeable trend is a decline in the quality of teaching that was witnessed in the early 80s and 90s.Cases of reproduction and use of same of old notes by lecturers have not gone unnoticed even despite rapid advancements in the field of information technology.

Under funding and Development of Facilities

The facilities needed for teaching and learning process in tertiary institutions include classrooms, laboratories, workshops, staff offices and libraries. Others are hostels, staff quarters, students and staff recreation centres, sports and games facilities, roads, electricity and water supply. There was steady improvement in the physical plans from the 70s and 80s to the mid-90s of the public universities established during this period. These institutions were able to support comfortable residential accommodation for students where laundry was free, rooms were well laid out and three -course meals served. This decay is so terrible that it has been a source of incessant strikes by the Academic Staff Union of Universities and condemnation by the parents and students.

As a matter of fact, the current university facilities are overly stretched and their elasticity has reached the wall. This is where Finance is so crucial because the establishment and the running of tertiary institutions is a capital intensive venture and running the institutions therefore, requires significant investment in providing and maintaining a basic level of infrastructure such as staff salaries, and residential housing. Universities in Kenya have been supported largely by government kinds in the time past, but with economic downturn, they have been forced to consider exploring and exploiting other resource avenues outside and within their reach so as to fund their massive developmental and academic programs. The inclusion of self-sponsored university degree programmes was a major boost to the income levels of public universities with increased enrollment and funds to support university programs (Kiamba, 2003).

The underfunding scenario has invariably led to the quality of university education being adversely affected. What is not new today within the public university landscape is poor state of infrastructures, overcrowded classrooms, incessant strike and students' unrest.

Recruitment and Selection of Academic Staff

Public universities have autonomy in this regard. They recruit and select their staff. The only limitation here is that they cannot fix their remuneration outside the government approved structure which unfortunately cannot attract desired teaching personnel from any where in the world. Even at the present level of enhancement, the remuneration package of the Kenyan university teacher is still lower given the upsurge in the cost of living. This has become an impediment to attracting lectures in relevant areas from some African countries, Europe, America, Japan and other key Asian countries. The concept of the university requires that its academic staff disposition is universal in profile. That is why some culture specific programmes like foreign languages, Arabic studies, Institute of America Studies etc should for purposes of universal relevance and comparison have on their teaching staff, specialists from those cultures. Since quality has to do with relevance this obviously has a quality assurance implication.

What is the way forward for quality assurance in University Education?

This paper suggests that as a way forward specific quality assurance mechanisms be put in place to ensure that university learning programmes are of the required standards and that syllabus coverage is not done with a view to passing examinations.

Improved Funding:

Government should be alive to her duties by funding public universities adequately if the public university system is not to remain what it is at the moment – pathetic, sterile, irrelevant and uncreative. The universities on their parts should also look inward by strengthening their internally generated revenue base without compromising minimum academic standards. Society should be encouraged to give more financial support to university education in Kenya since it is obvious that government alone can not single handedly finance University education.

Checking on Enrolment:

The Kenya universities should ensure that the number of students admitted at any given time is commensurate to available facilities, so that quality will not be compromised. As they strive to achieve this desire it is of important as highlighted in the Sessional Paper No.1, 2005 that the type of university education and training provided will, need to be demand driven, and of high quality as well as gender sensitive, technologically

informed, research supported, democratically managed and globally marketable,'(P: 47).

Infrastructural development:

Provision and maintenance of physical facilities must be ensured in public universities in Kenya. It appears as if there is no maintenance culture on the parts of the university management. Government should provide more basic infrastructures to universities. Macharia (2007) argues that without the right infrastructure in universities, it will be difficult for them to achieve the objectives set. The corporate organizations and alumni associations should also come to the aid of the universities by providing more physical facilities.

Good Management:

The universities management must also ensure this. There have been cases of University administrators who could not account for money released for their institutions. Situation like this usually discourage the government, individuals even corporate organisations from coming to the aid of universities. Therefore efficient management of resources must be ensured on the part of universities administrators if quality assurance is to be achieved and sustained in the Kenyan Universities System.

Staff Motivation:

Lecturers should be motivated through enhanced salary package and good condition of service. They should be encouraged by the universities to go for further training by sponsoring them for local and international conferences, workshops and seminars. Lecturers should also be encouraged to go into quality researches that will benefit the University System rather than publishing papers with sole aim of promotion.

Circular policy

This is a quality context. Quality assurance in the university must have to do with the relevance of the programmes. There must be societal justification for every programme on the curriculum. It must either be social, economic, political, cultural, environmental or some or all of these. This sees quality as relevance. It must have utility. It must not be an abstraction. These can be assured by universities in the following areas.
(i) Periodic review of existing programmes to check on flaws or breakdowns. This can probably be done every three years.
(ii) Review of objective in the light of changing needs and demands of the society.
(iii) Ensure that the procedure for modifying programmes (deletion and addition of courses) is not cumbersome. This way, outdated and irrelevant courses are quickly removed and new ones added.

Stakeholder Feedback

An important element of all quality assurance systems in the universities is the consideration of feedback and opinion from stakeholders in the institution. There should be formal procedures and representational structures that allow the receipt of comment from students, graduates, employers and the government. This supplements the indirect feedback that is received by members of staff by their analysis of coursework and of examination results. This could be done through completing course evaluation instruments.

Conclusion

Quality Assurance is a matter of global interest to higher education, and has become popular since the 1990s. It is the mechanism through which institutions can establish that their products are competitive and meet internationally accepted standards of quality and excellence. The increasingly popular global trend towards quality assurance has considerably shaped educational policies and academic planning of universities throughout the world. Therefore this paper concludes with the view that to move the country along the right path of development in the 21st century requires funding, committal, focus and constant evaluation of educational policy and implementation for optimal quality assurance. The Government should therefore increase efforts to implement programmes that will help achieve the goals of the global declarations with respect to children's education, invest in pedagogical innovations, optimize quality assurance especially with reference to the factors jeopardizing quality attainment as discussed in this paper.

Recommendation

The state of quality assurance in Kenyan public Universities is becoming a source of worry to stakeholders. This could be as a result of myriads of problems facing the country's University System. Most of these problems however could be addressed by embracing a comprehensive approach and the tool most frequently drawn upon today is that of Total Quality Management (TQM) (Motwani and Kumar, 1997; Eriksen, 1995), which is centred on quality, based on the participation of all its members and aiming at long term success through customer satisfaction and benefits to all members of the organization and to society.' (Wiklund et al, 2003). The rationale for adoption is that TQM has the potential to encompass the quality perspectives of both external and internal stakeholders in an integrated manner, and thereby enable a inclusive approach to quality management that will assure quality as well as facilitate change and innovation.

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