

DOES UNIVERSITY EDUCATION PRODUCE “HALF-BAKED” GRADUATES? PERSPECTIVES FROM GRADUATES OF A KENYAN UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

University education in Kenya has had an exponential growth in terms of the number of chartered universities and that of students' enrolment over the past decade. This phenomenal growth has been occasioned by the need to increase access to higher education in line with the Kenya Vision 2030. However, concerns have been raised among educational stakeholders as to whether this exponential growth in quantity matches with the production of quality graduates to meet current and future industrial needs of the country. This study, therefore, aimed at investigating the aforementioned through a graduate tracer survey (GTS) in one of the Kenyan universities with the view of investigating in retrospect, the perceptions of graduates regarding the status of university education in terms of study conditions, provisions, experiences, teaching and learning conditions; investigating graduates' experiences as they transited to the labour market; and finally, assessing the relevance of the skills offered at university to the requirements of the labour market. The study was anchored on the Context, Input, Process and Product (CIPP) model of curriculum evaluation. By employing the *expost facto* research design and cross-sectional survey method, data was collected for three months (April-July, 2016) from a target population of 360 graduates of Laikipia University (LU). The target cohort was that of 2013 graduates both from the Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.-Arts) and Bachelor of Commerce (B.Com) programmes. An online questionnaire was administered, via the SoSci Platform in collecting data from which, the data was transferred to the SPSS programme for analysis. The findings, among others, revealed that more than half (53%) of the graduates did not have access to ICT facilities at the university while only 27 per cent of those who had access to ICT had some knowledge in accessing learning resources. Library facilities were rated below average with availability of e-resources and adequacy of library space being rated as very bad especially from the satellite campus graduates. The study also established that less than one third of the participants rated their experiences in research as either good or very good. It was also revealed that a graduate from the university took an average of about 10 months to get a job both due to limited jobs in area of specialization and corruption issues. In addition, majority (86 per cent) of the B.Com graduates took additional training in order to improve their employment chances. It was further revealed that even though most skills acquired at the university were relevant and highly utilized in the work place, university contribution particularly towards the attainment of ICT skills was low in spite of the skill being in high demand. This study therefore recommends among others that the university institutes measures towards integrating ICT in teaching and learning for quality curriculum delivery. Further, the university needs to expand library space and stock relevant resources for library users especially in the satellite campuses. Additionally, the B.Com curricular should be reviewed to incorporate relevant content as per the current needs of the industry.

Keywords: *Graduates, labour market, quality, relevance, skills, study conditions.*

Introduction

Globalization has created a vibrant and dynamic global market with major impacts on Higher Education (HE) institutions worldwide. In Africa and particularly in Kenya, university education has had an exponential growth in terms of the number of chartered universities and that of students' enrolment over the past decade. This phenomenal growth has been occasioned by the need to increase access to higher education among the populace in line with the goals of Kenya Vision 2030 of creating a knowledge based economy wherein university education is earmarked as the main driver of change towards the realization of the vision. In spite of this exponential growth, concerns are being raised about the quality of graduates from most universities. Quite often the phrase “half-baked graduates” is used in the employment circles to describe a university graduate of poor quality, lacking in employability skills, technical mastery and work related skills.

It is worth noting that universities are established to meet specific objectives. In the event that these objectives are not met, then they cannot justify the huge public expenditure on them. According to the Kenya's

Vision 2030 blueprint, universities will play an integral role in transforming Kenya into an industrializing, “middle-income country providing a high quality life to all its citizens by the year 2030” (Republic of Kenya, 2007). This is because education and training at university level is expected to achieve the following (Republic of Kenya, 2006):

- Imparting hands-on skills and capacity to perform multiple and specific national and international tasks.
- Creation of dependable and sustainable workforce in the form of human resource capital for national growth and development.
- Creation of entrepreneurial capacity for empowering individuals to create self-employment and employment for others.
- Offering opportunities for advancement of learning beyond basic education with strong leaning towards scholarship and research.
- Creation of a strong national research base at various sectors of economic and national development.
- Bridging the gap between theory and practice in various disciplines of education and training.
- Creation of a strong sense of nationalistic and global development.
- Inculcation of a culture of precision, moral discipline and work ethic which are necessary in modern industrial and technological world.

Since one of the objectives of university education is to bridge the gap between theory and practice in various disciplines of education and training (Republic of Kenya, 2006), it is important that training at the university level be demand driven rather than supply driven. This means that university programmes are to be tailored to the needs of the market rather than the market being attuned to what the universities produce. However, stakeholders in Kenya have been raising concern regarding the quality of the graduates that are being churned out of Kenyan universities. There is a popular view among industry stakeholders that education at the university level does not match the requirements of the labour market thus making most of the graduates unemployable (Riechi, 2008). Eshiwani (2009) asserts that university graduates lack in communication skills and technical proficiency hence being unfit for the job market.

It is therefore, against this backdrop that universities should be interested in finding empirical evidence regarding the professional relevance of their study programmes. One way of achieving this is by leveraging on getting systematic feedback from their graduates so as to help on the improvement of the study programmes that they offer. One of the most innovative ways currently practised by universities in the developed world about the relevance of their study programmes is through graduate tracer surveys. It is on this account that Laikipia University conducted its first ever graduate tracer survey to establish the relevance of the courses that are offered at the university to the requirements of the job market.

Objectives of the Study

1. To find out the perceptions of graduates regarding the status of the university in terms of study conditions, provisions, experiences, and teaching and learning conditions.
2. Investigate the experiences of graduates as they transit to the job market.
3. To establish the relevance of skills offered at university in relation to the requirements of the job market.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. How do the graduates perceive the status of the university on the following aspects: study conditions, provisions, experiences, and teaching and learning conditions?
2. What are the experiences of graduates as they transit from university to the world of work?
3. How relevant are the skills acquired at the university to the requirements of the labour market?

Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored on Daniel Stufflebeam’s Context, Input, Process and Product (CIPP) model of curriculum evaluation (Stufflebeam, 1971). The CIPP model provides a means for generating data relating to four stages of programme operation. According to Stufflebeam, a curriculum should first be evaluated within the parameters of the environment by continuously assessing the needs and problems in the context to help decision makers determine

goals and objectives through context evaluation. Second, is the input evaluation, which assesses alternative means for achieving those goals to help decision makers choose optimal means. Third, is process evaluation that monitors the processes. Process evaluation will ensure that the means are actually being implemented and modifications made if and when necessary. Lastly is the product evaluation, which compares actual ends with intended ends and leads to a series of recycling decisions. The model was found to be relevant in the study in the sense that the study sought to evaluate from the graduates' point of view, the context and inputs from the point of the study conditions, provisions, experiences, teaching and learning conditions. The process factors were viewed from the skills acquisition and university contributions to the acquisition of the said skills. Output factors were looked at from the point of transition to the world of work from the university and skills acquired.

Methodology

The study was preceded by a call from the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and the University of Duisburg-Essen (UDE) who invited applicants across East African universities to participate in the tracer study course which lasted from October 2015 to November 2016. A total of 12 universities drawn from the East African region were represented in the programme. They constituted 6 universities from Kenya, 4 from Tanzania, and 2 from Uganda.

The Kenyan universities that were present included Laikipia University (LU), Dedan Kimathi University of Science and Technology (DKUST), Technical University of Kenya (TUK), Moi University (MU), Catholic University of East Africa (CUEA), and Tangaza University College (TUC). Each of these participating universities was represented by two individual participants of whom one was an expert in quality assurance and higher education matters and the other, an expert in data analytics. In this endeavour, Laikipia University was represented by Dr. Nzioki - Director Quality Assurance and Standards (DQAS) and Dr. Mwebi from the Department of Curriculum and Education Management (C&EM) who was to be in charge of Data analysis. All the participants were taken through a hands-on training through face to face sessions and online mentorship programme for the entire course of study which lasted for a period of 15 months. The outcome of the programme was to have the teams from the represented universities conduct a graduate tracer study of their graduates.

The Laikipia University team settled on the 2013 cohort of graduates being the first cohort to graduate from Laikipia University upon being chartered. The target participants constituted the B.Ed. and B.Com graduates of 2013. According to the records of the alumni provided by the Registrar of academic affairs at the university, the total number of students who graduated in 2013 was 364. Of this, 321 were from the B.Ed. programme who had completed their studies from the university main campus and 43 were B.Com graduates who had completed their studies from the Naivasha campus. The researchers, through the directorate of quality assurance, tasked the secretary to verify the authenticity of the phone and email addresses of the graduates. Efforts were also made to find the graduates using the class representatives of the particular time through social media (WhatsApp and face book). At the end of the exercise, only 136 phone and email addresses were found to be authentic. A letter inviting the graduates to participate in the study was drafted by the Deputy Vice Chancellor in charge of academics and research (DVC-AR). The DVC's letter and the Questionnaires were sent via the SoSci survey platform to the respective email accounts of the respondents. The SoSci Survey, just like survey monkey and google forms, is a server for administering online questionnaires and was made available to the respondents on www.soscisurvey.de.

The researchers collected data for a period of three months (April 2016-July 2017) within which they gave four reminders urging the respondents to fill in the questionnaires and return them. At the end of the data collection period, a total of 69 questionnaires were fully filled in and returned via the SoSci survey platform. This response rate represented a return rate of 51 per cent. The collected data was then downloaded to the SPSS programme, coded and appropriate syntax commands developed for all the study variables. The coded data was descriptively analysed using percentages and frequencies. Presentation of the data findings was done using tables and figures.

Findings of the Study

Perceptions of Graduates Regarding Study Conditions, Provisions, Experiences, and Teaching and Learning Conditions

A plethora of questions were put forth for the participants to respond to. This was with regard to the general study conditions, provisions, and experiences, teaching and learning conditions.

Study Conditions

The first question that was posed to the participants was as to whether they completed their studies within the standard period of time. In response, about 92 per cent of the participants confirmed that they had completed studies within the stipulated time while 8 per cent of the participants expressed a contrary view. On the basis of these responses, the study prodded further to establish completion rates per programme of study. In view of this, the study found out that all the B.Com graduates completed their studies in the standard period of time compared to 92 per cent of the B.Ed. graduates who said that they completed their studies in the standard period of time (table 10.1).

Table 10.1: Study Programme and Completion of Studies

		B10: Did you complete your study programme in the standard period of time?	
		Yes	No
A2C: Which study programme did you graduate in from Laikipia university?	B.Ed.	92.6%	7.4%
	B.Com	100.0%	
Total		92.1%	7.9%

It is however worth noting that the two programmes are run on different modes. Whereas the B.Ed. programme runs on the semester system, the B.Com programme runs on the trimester system. Hence the completion period can be attributed to the mode of study and not necessarily the programme of study.

The study also delved into finding more about the living conditions of the students at the university. In this regard, a question was posed to the graduates, thus: During your study at the university, most of the time you lived in? The respective choices that respondents were to choose from included; staying alone in university hostel, alone in private apartment, with family, or with friends. Responses obtained in this regard showed that majority (54%) of the graduates stayed together with friends in a shared hostel or apartment, while about 22 per cent of them lived alone in a private apartment. Other students lived together with family members or stayed alone in a university hostel. However, it is important to point out that all the B.Com graduates either lived alone in a private apartment or stayed with family (spouse, children or partner). On the contrary, majority (68%) of the B.Ed. graduates shared a hostel/apartment with friends (table 10.2). Interestingly, none of the B.Ed. graduates lived together with family. It is worth noting that most of the B.Ed. students at the time were government sponsored while the B.Com students at the time were self-sponsored. There is, therefore, a high likelihood of most B.Com students either staying with their families or alone in apartments. The government sponsored students, on the other hand, are likely to pool resources in order to cushion themselves against the diminishing stipend by government hence justifying the need of most of them staying together.

Table 10.2: Study Programme and Place of Stay

		B30: How did you live most of the time during your study at the University?			
		Alone in university hostel	Alone in a private apartment	With my family (spouse, partner, children)	Shared hostel/apartment (with friends)
A2C: Which study programme did you	B.Ed.	20.0%	12.0%		68.0%
	B.Com		50.0%	50.0%	

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graduate in from Laikipia university?	Others (please specify)	66.7%	33.3%
Total		13.9%	25.0%
		13.9%	47.2%

Financing of Graduates' Education

The study further sought to find out from the graduates on how their university education was financed. Several alternatives were put forth from which the respondents were to pick. The options given that they were to choose from included full/partial scholarships, Higher Education Loans Board (HELB), parents/family, own funds and spouse. Analysis of the sources of funds for financing education is as shown in figure 10.1.

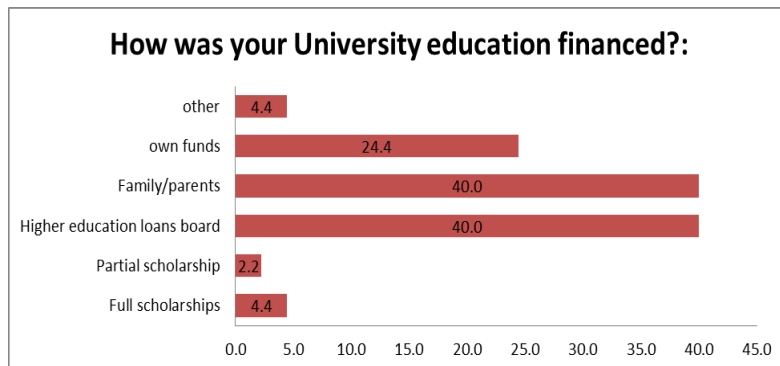


Fig. 10.1: How University Education was financed

From figure 10.1, it can be noted that majority of the graduates were either supported by parents (family) or HELB to finance their education as shown by 40 per cent of the respondents in each case. Nearly a quarter of the respondents used own funds to finance education while the rest used either full or partial scholarships and other sources of funds such as work study programmes at the university.

ICT Facilities

The study sought to find out if the graduates had access to ICT facilities while studying at the university. The findings revealed that about 53 per cent of the graduates did not have access to ICT facilities while 47 per cent confirmed that they had access to ICT facilities (table 10.3). However, 68 per cent of the students who said that they did not have access to ICT facilities were from the satellite campus compared to 46 per cent from the main campus. From the main campus, 53 per cent of the students were however in agreement that they had access to ICT facilities compared to 33 per cent from the satellite campus. This means that students who were studying at the main campus were fairly more advantaged than the satellite campus students in terms of access to ICT facilities.

Table 10.3: Campus of Study and Access to ICT Facilities

	B5C: Did you have access to ICT facilities at your University?		Total	
	Yes	No		
A3OI: In which campus were you studying in while at Laikipia university?	-Main	53.8%	46.2%	100.0%
	- Naivasha	33.3%	66.7%	100.0%
Total		47.4%	52.6%	100.0%

From the students who had access to ICT facilities, the study further sought to establish their competencies in computer applications especially in the use of Microsoft applications. In view of this, the study found out that of

those who had access to ICT facilities, about 70 per cent were competent in internet browsing, while about 64 per cent were competent in using Microsoft office application, and about 60 per cent of them were competent in online job applications (figure 10.2). Interestingly, only 27 per cent of the respondents were competent in using ICT facilities to access e-learning resources. This implies that students were not able to use the internet and other related services in doing research. Further, it means that ICT integration in teaching-learning process is far from being achieved at the university.

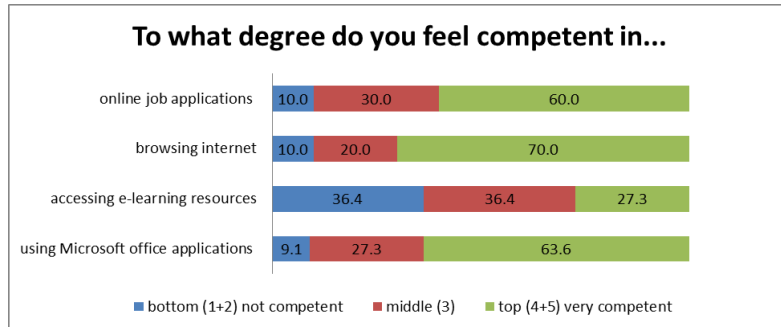


Fig. 10.2: Competency in Applying ICT Facilities

Library Facilities

One of the key facilities in an institution of learning is a library. To this end, the study sought to find out how the graduates rated the library facility in a number of aspects that ranged from availability of study materials in the field of study, relevance of the study materials, availability of e-resources, to adequacy of library space and library time (opening and closing) as shown in figure 10.3.

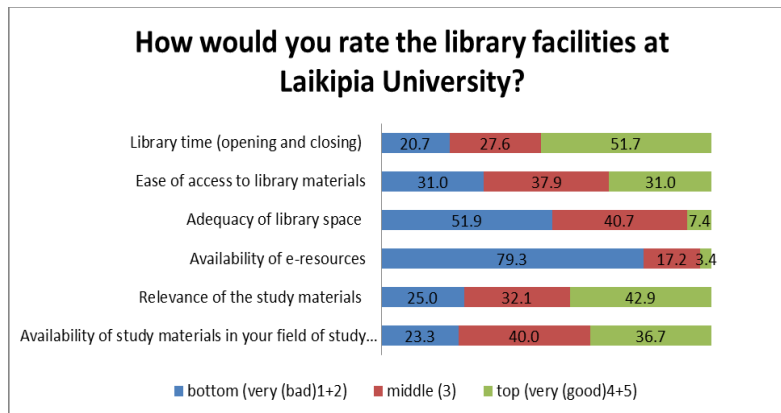


Fig. 10.3: Rating of Library Facilities

From figure 10.3, it can be observed that nearly 52 per cent of the graduates rated library opening and closing time as either good or very good. About 43 per cent of the graduates rated the relevance of study materials to be good while about 37 per cent of them rated availability of study materials in one's field as either good or very good. On the other hand, however, adequacy of library space and availability of e-resources were rated as (very) bad. It is important to note that academic success cannot be achieved if the library is lacking in essentials. Quality in education can only be guaranteed when students are availed the necessary and relevant tools of trade. Without this, quality will be compromised.

The researchers felt the need to investigate further and delineate data by doing a comparative analysis to establish the relative rating among the campus graduates with regard to the library facilities. Table 10.4 shows analysis of each of the parameters across both Laikipia university main campus and Naivasha campus.

Table 10.1: Rating of Library Facilities (Comparison across Campuses)

How would you rate study facilities at LU in terms of:	Rating per campus			
	Main Campus		Naivasha Campus	
	Bad	Good	Bad	Good
Relevance of the study materials	17.7%	52.9	40	30
Availability of e-resources	77.8	5.6	80	-
Adequacy of library space	62.5	12.5	30	-
Ease of access to library materials	33.3	38.9	30	20
Library time (opening and closing)	11.1%	55.6	40	40

Table 10.4 reveals that students who graduated from the main campus expressed their dissatisfaction with availability of e-resources in which nearly 78 per cent of the graduates rated the variable as bad compared to nearly 6 per cent who said that availability of the e-resources was good. Similarly, 62.5 per cent of graduates from main campus rated library space as bad and nearly one third of the graduates rated ease of access to library facilities as bad. At the Naivasha Campus, a majority (80%) rated relevance of study materials and library time (opening and closing) as bad.

Methods of Teaching

The study sought to find out from the graduates, the extent to which different modes of teaching were being used in the university. In this respect, the modes of delivering content that were considered for rating included: lectures, demonstrations, participation in research projects/project based, practical exercises/field work, internship, discussions and integration of ICT in teaching and e-learning. Figure 10.4 shows the results of the analysis.

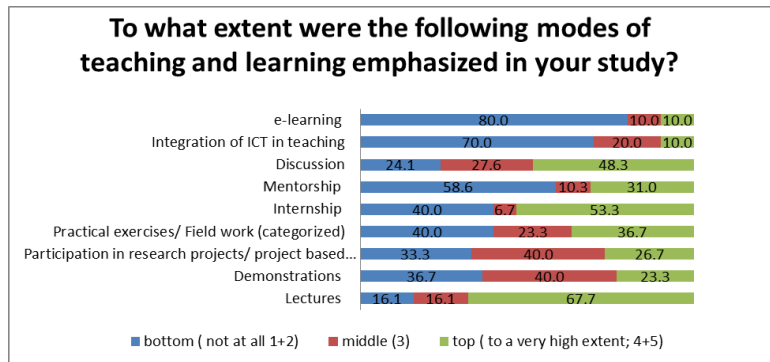


Fig. 10.4: Extent of Using Modes of Teaching

From figure 10.4, it is apparent that 68 per cent of the respondents viewed lecture method as the most used in the teaching and learning process at the university. This implies that it is the most prevalent form of teaching and learning. Other methods used include internship (53%), followed by discussion (48%). However, use of e-learning and integration of ICT in teaching were not commonly used as can be seen from the ratings by the graduates. In this regard, 80 per cent of the respondents were of the view that e-learning was not used at all while 70 per cent of the respondents were of the opinion that integration of ICT in teaching was not being used at all. This finding confirms the earlier one where it was found that there was a dearth of ICT facilities in the university thus making ICT integration difficult.

Mentorship and practical work were also rated poorly in the sense that about 59 per cent of the respondents said that mentorship is not used at all while 40 per cent of them opined that internship and practical exercises were not used. This implies that students are graduating from the university without sufficient mentorship and the requisite practical experiences required in the world of work. The same view was also expressed when respondents were asked to rate participation in research and use of demonstration where 33 per cent and about 37 per cent of

graduates, respectively, said that they were not used at all. The findings serve as an indicator to show how universities are offering purely academic knowledge without considering the match between theory and practice.

Study Facilities and Services

For successful learning to take place, students should be exposed to various services and facilities while at the university. It is on this note that the study sought to find out the perceptions of graduates regarding how they rate the study facilities and services while at university. Among the various study facilities graduates were required to rate included: lecture halls/rooms, accommodation, feeding/cafeteria, health facilities, recreational facilities and the student centre. The study services on the other hand constituted: mentorship (guidance & counselling), scholarship/work-study, variety of academic programmes offered and co-curricular activities. The rating of these facilities and services is shown in figure 10.5.

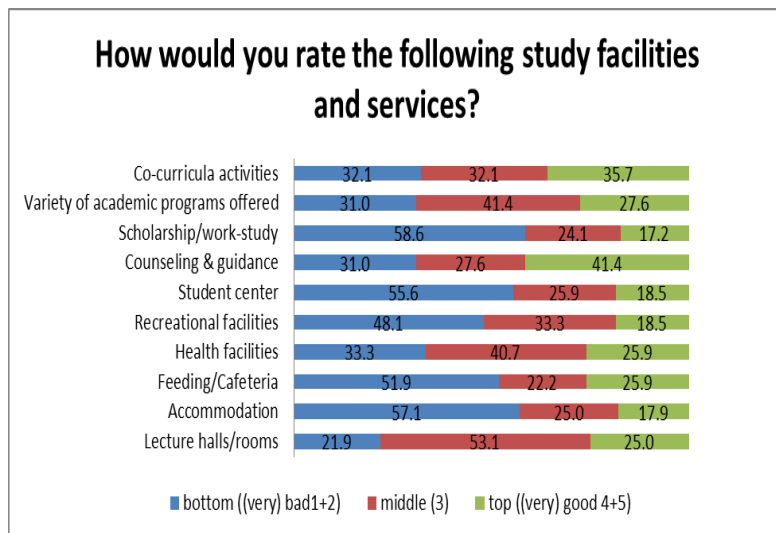


Fig. 10.5: Rating of Study Facilities and Services

It is clear from figure 10.5 that all the facilities and services offered at the university to the students were rated as either bad or very bad. With regard to the lecture halls, 25 per cent of the graduates rated them as very good; about 22 per cent of them rated them as bad while about 53 per cent of them were not sure as to whether they were good or bad. University accommodation was rated badly as expressed by about 57 per cent of the respondents while about 18 per cent of the respondents rated it as good. Similarly, recreational facilities were rated as bad by about 48 per cent of the graduates compared to about 18 per cent of the respondents who rated the facilities as good. Guidance and counselling services on the other hand were rated as good by a majority (41%) of the respondents while about 31 per cent of them rated it as bad.

Scholarships or work study programmes were also rated badly by about 59 per cent of the respondents. About 56 per cent of the respondents rated student centre poorly. Overall, it can be observed that students' welfare facilities and services were rated poorly by the graduates. It should be noted that without sufficient facilities and services catering for the welfare of the learner, no significant learning can take place. One of the major imperatives that the Commission for University Education (CUE) uses to evaluate the quality of university curricular is course content; instructional process; infrastructure and equipment for the delivery of the course; and instructional and reference materials (Commission for University Education, 2013). It is therefore important to note that the university has not been able to achieve most of the requirements in terms of the measured parameter as per the CUE regulations.

Study Experiences

The graduates were asked to rate their views with regard to their experiences on the following: classroom environment (lectures & tutorials), internship programme (field course /practicum), community service and outreach, research supervision, student organization, participation in extracurricular activities, social relations (peers, friends), formal relations (teaching and non-teaching), and guidance and counselling (figure 10.6).

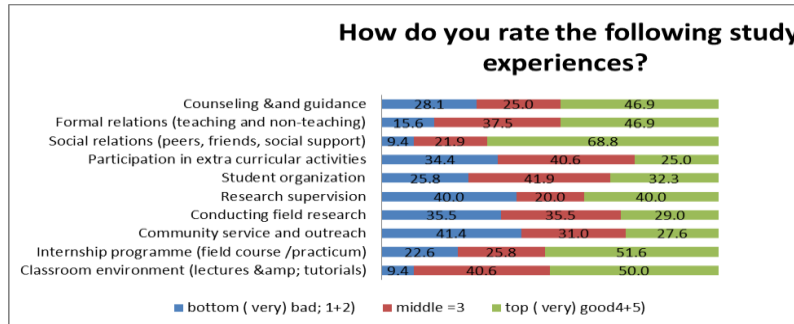


Fig.10.6: Rating of Study Experiences

It can be observed from figure 10.6 that nearly 69 per cent of the respondents rated experiences on social relations as good while about 10 per cent rated the experience as bad. Experiences with regard to internship programme were rated as good by about 52 per cent of the respondents while those regarding classroom environment were rated as good by half of the respondents. About 47 per cent of the respondents rated experiences with regard to guidance and counselling and formal relationship as good. Only 40 per cent of the respondents rated experiences of research supervision as good.

Some of the experiences which respondents highly rated as bad include; community service or outreach (41%); research supervision (40%), conducting field research (35.5%); and participating in extracurricular activities (34%). It is worth noting that the mandate of universities is that of offering highly specialized quality training, research, consultancy, and community service. However, the aforementioned findings seem to suggest that the university has not lived up to the expectations. It is therefore important that curricular aspects of the university be attuned to offering state of the art functionalities in view of community service and research.

Job Search and Transition to Work

One of the roles of universities is to prepare graduates to transit into the world of work. It is in this regard that the study sought to find out the graduates' experiences with regard to searching for jobs as a way of transitioning to the workplace. The challenges faced by the graduates of Laikipia University in job searching process are also brought into focus.

The first question that was posted to the respondent regarding job search was: Have you ever made attempts to look for employment? 95 per cent of the graduates responded in the affirmative (Yes) while only 5 per cent responded in the negative (No). This implies that most of the students try to seek for employment after completing their studies. Those who responded by saying "No" were further asked to supply reasons as to why they did not want to seek for employment. All of them said that they already had a job. However, it was established that majority (44%) of the graduates started looking for jobs prior to completing their studies or after the completion of their studies.

Further, the researchers sought to find out how long it took for one to get a job after obtaining a degree. In view of this, respondents were required to give an estimate on the number of months taken to get a job. It was found that averagely, a Laikipia university graduate took about 10 months to get a job after obtaining a degree, and this was after making an average of 108 applications with about 10 responses for an interview. Despite this fact, it is also important to note that the period in months taken to get a job varied from as low as 0 months to as high as 60 months. This clearly serves to demonstrate that there are some wide disparities as to when one enters the job market.

Similarly, the respondents were asked to state how they looked for their jobs after graduation. A majority said that they got their first job through use of networks and by use of friends/peers. The use of the media, relatives and waiting for government posting were equally used. It should be noted however that there were fewer cases that used the alumni, career office and employment agencies to look for jobs. This can be attributed to either the lack of awareness of the role these bodies perform or simply that they do not exist.

It was interesting also to find out how the graduates were absorbed in their first job after graduation. The findings revealed that most of the graduates were absorbed in their first job after some interview. About 8 per cent were retained in their jobs after internship while 29 per cent of them had to apply in order to be accepted. The study also sought to establish those factors which prompted the graduate to apply for the first job. It was revealed through the study that factors such as relevance of the skills acquired (27.6%) and the job being the only option available (24.1%) were important. Among the most prevalent reasons that prompted graduates to apply for their first job was the fact that most of them were likely not to be placed on jobs related to their areas of speciality. Similarly, some respondents were of the view that salary (24.1%), passion (10.3%) and location (6.9%) were also among the factors that graduates considered as prompting them to seek their first job.

Challenges Encountered During Job Search

It was important to know from the graduates' point of view the challenges they may have encountered during their search for a job after they completed their first degree. Results in view of this variable showed that the major impediment towards getting a job was the fact that there were limited jobs in one's field of specialization (29.4%). Corruption was also a major challenge (23.5%). Other challenges cited included inadequate experience (14.7%), inadequate networks (11.8%), and gender discrimination (2.9%).

Important Factors That Influenced Employment

The study also sought to establish those factors that greatly influenced employment of the graduates. Responses on this parameter are as presented in figure 10.7.

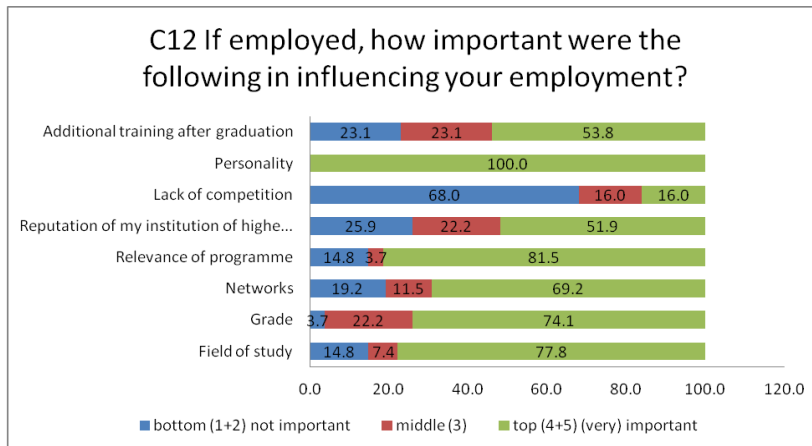


Fig. 10.7: Important Factors Influencing Employment

It can be observed from figure 10.7 that majority of the graduates viewed personality as an important factor that influenced employment. About 82 per cent of the respondents were of the view that the relevance of the programme influenced employment while about 78 per cent of the graduates were of the view that the field of study was an important factor that influenced their employment. Moreover, about 74 per cent of the graduates believed that grades influenced employment. Nearly 70 per cent of them viewed networks as an important factor that influenced their employment. About 54 per cent of the graduates believed that additional training after graduation was important to enable them secure employment while about 52 per cent were of the view that reputation of their institution gave them some mileage in securing employment. It is however worth noting that lack of competition was not an important factor that influenced employment.

As a follow up to the question with respect to the factors that influenced one's employment prospects, the study also sought to find out if the graduates took additional training in order to improve their chances of employment. About 58 per cent of the respondents acknowledged to have taken additional training in order to improve their chances of being employed. The study also found that most of the graduates took additional training in accounting (36.8%) while other graduates took courses in leadership (21.1%), ICT (21.1%), languages (10.5%) and

entrepreneurship (10.5%). On further investigation, the study found out that majority (85.7 %) of the B.Com graduates undertook additional training to improve their chances of employment compared to about 42.1 per cent of the B.Ed. graduates (table 10.5).

Table 10.5: Improving Chances of Employment by Programme

		C13C: Did you take any other courses to improve your chances of employment?		
		Yes	No	Total
A2C: Which study programme did you graduate in from Laikipia university?	-B.Ed.	42.1%	57.9%	100.0%
	- B.Com	85.7%	14.3%	100.0%
Total		55.2%	44.8%	100.0%

Relevance of the Skills (University Contribution)

The third objective of the study was to establish the skills that the graduates acquired from the university and how the university contributed to the acquisition of the said skills. Figure 10.8 shows the extent to which the graduate had the said skills at the time of graduation and the university's contribution to the said competencies.

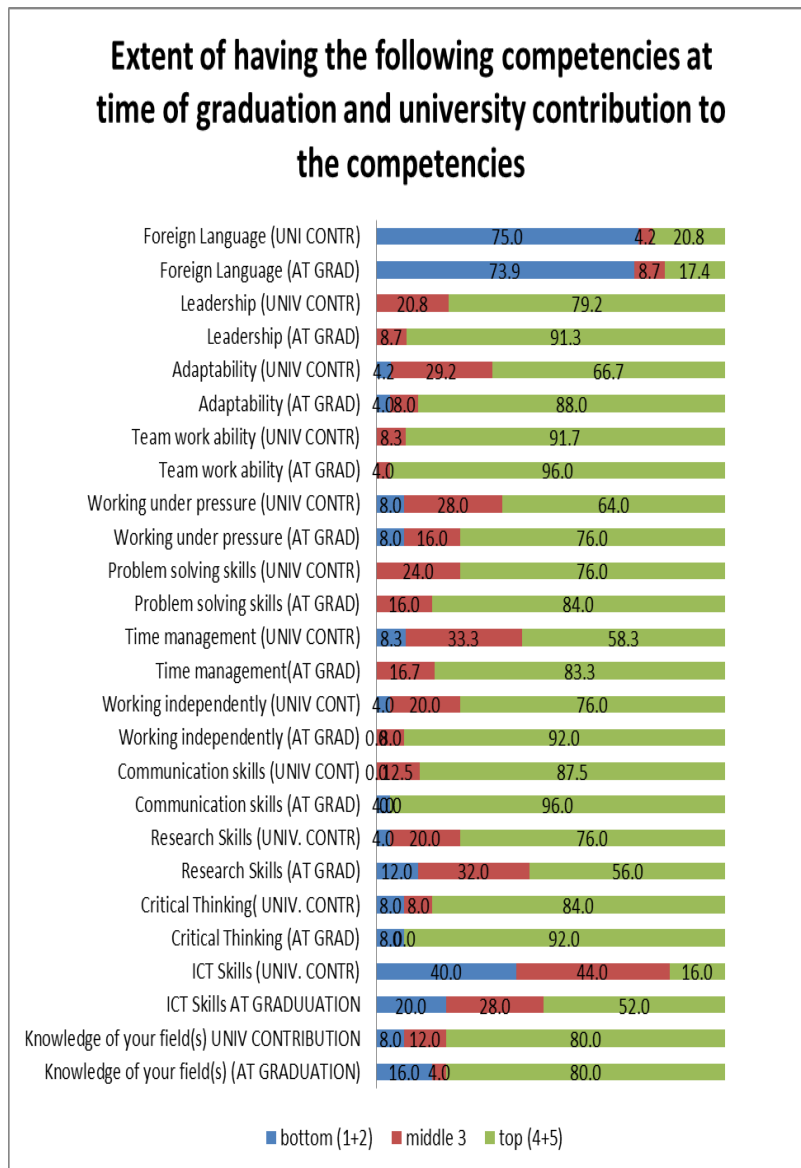


Fig. 10.8: Extent of Having Competencies and University Contribution

As can be observed from figure 10.8, graduates were of the view that they had acquired the following competencies by the time they were graduating: team work and communication skills (96%); critical thinking and working independently (92%); leadership (91.3%); adaptability (88%); problem solving (84%); time management (83.3%); knowledge in the field (80%); working under pressure (76%); research skills (56%); ICT skills (52%) and foreign language (17.4%). According to the graduates, the university contribution to the said competencies was as follows: team work ability (91.7%); communication skills (87.5%); critical thinking (84%); knowledge in the area of specialization (80%); leadership (79.2%); research skills, problem solving and working independently (76% each); adaptability (66.7%); working under pressure (64%); time management (58.3%); foreign language (20.8%); and ICT skills (16%).

It is worth noting that whereas 52 per cent of the graduates had ICT skills at the time of graduation, the university contribution to the acquisition of the said skill was minimal as expressed by 16 per cent of the graduates. It is also worth noting that 56 per cent of the graduates felt that they had acquired research skills at the time of graduation of which, 76 per cent of them credited the acquisition of the skills to the university. Similarly, it can be seen that the university did little in contributing to the acquisition of foreign language skills.

Utilization of the Skills at Work Place

In order to establish the relevance of the skills acquired at the university to the job market, the study sought to find out from the graduates how the skills that they acquired at the university were being utilized in the work place. This is shown in figure 10.9.

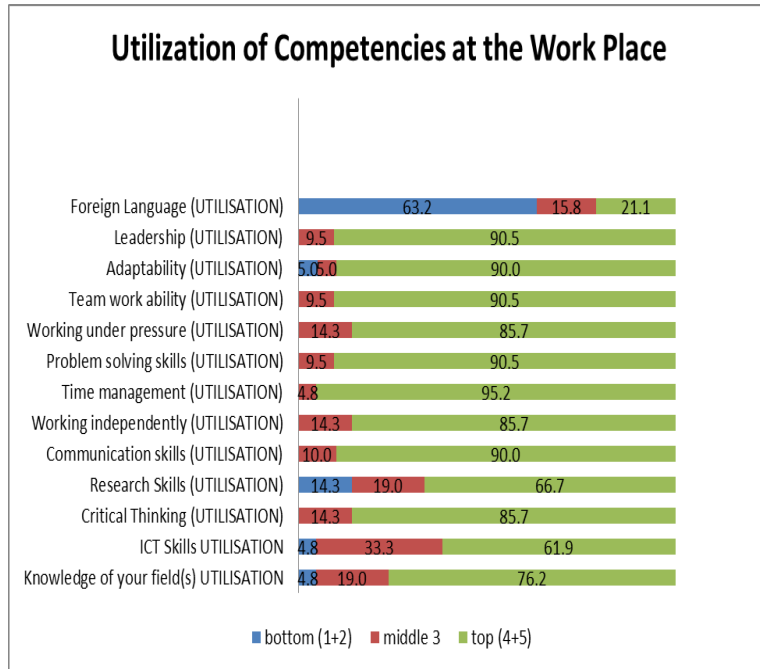


Fig.10.9: Utilization of the Competencies at the Work Place

From figure 10.9, it is observed that the utilization of skills acquired at the graduate’s work place was as follows: time management (95.5%); leadership; team work ability and problem solving skills (90.5%); communication skills and adaptability (90%); working under pressure, critical thinking and working independently (85.7%); knowledge of the field (76.2%); research skills (66.7%); ICT skills (61.9%); and foreign language (21.1%).

The findings on utilization of the various skills in the work place imply that the university should tailor the curriculum towards sharpening the soft skill competencies of the graduates besides the hard skills. In particular, the university needs to enhance skills on ICT, research, foreign language, adaptability and working under pressure as well as problem solving abilities.

Extent to which University Education has Laid Foundation on Various Aspects of Career

The study sought to establish the extent to which university training had laid foundation on starting work, development of entrepreneurial skills, personal development and future career of its graduates. Responses to this are shown in figure 10.10.

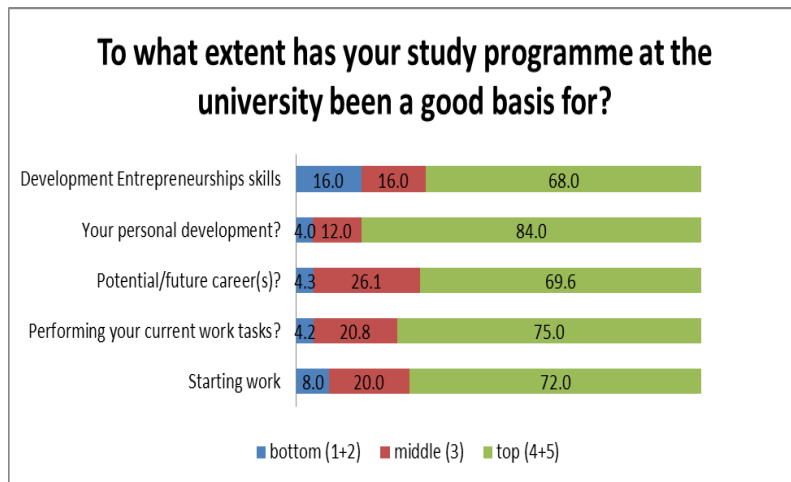


Fig. 10.10: Extent to Which University Education has Laid Basis for Career

From figure 10.10, it is noticeable that majority of the respondents (84%) were of the view that university education had laid a firm basis for their personal development, while 75 per cent of them said the university laid a good basis for performing their current tasks in the work place.

About 70 per cent of the graduates were of the view that the university laid a basis for their future career while 72 per cent were of the opinion that university education had laid a good basis for starting work and 68 per cent of the graduates felt that education at the university had laid a firm foundation on entrepreneurship skill development.

Relevance of the Field of Study to Work

The study sought to establish the extent to which the graduates' areas or field of study related to their area of work. From the analysis, majority (73%) of the graduates were of the opinion that their field of study related to a very high extent to their area of work. With regard to the level of academic qualifications required for employment in their current jobs, most of the graduates were of the view that what they do required a bachelor's degree qualification (52.2%), about 22 per cent were of the view that their current jobs require a master's qualification while about 17 per cent felt that their current jobs require a diploma qualification. Only 4 per cent were of the view that their jobs require a PhD level qualification. This implies that there are those graduates who are doing jobs for which they are either over qualified or under qualified.

Level of Influence of the Current Job

Further, the study sought to find out the views of the graduates on the extent to which their jobs provided social influence, higher salary, good work atmosphere, possibilities for further professional advancement, job security, clear and regulated tasks, work autonomy, possibilities of applying the acquired competencies, social status and recognition as well as clear and regulated work tasks.

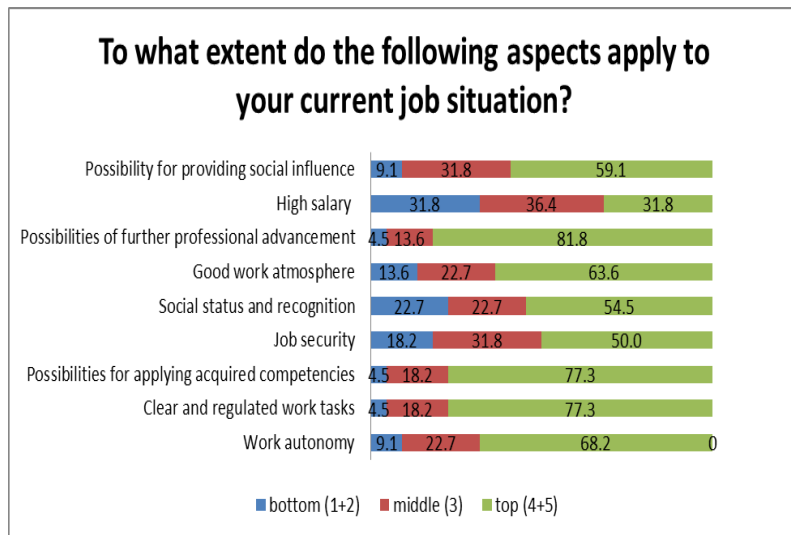


Fig. 10.11: Extent to which Some Aspects Apply to Current Job Situation

From figure 10.11, it is observed that about 82 per cent of the graduates view their current work as giving them possibilities for further professional advancement. About 77 per cent of them were of the opinion that their current job gave them clear and regulated work tasks and also possibilities for applying the acquired competencies. Nearly 68 per cent of them were of the view that their current job provided work autonomy, a good working atmosphere (64%), possibility for providing social influence (59.1%), social status and recognition (54%), and job security (50%). About 32 per cent were of the view that their current work situation provided higher salary. With regard to job satisfaction levels, the study however established that 52 per cent of the respondents were neither dissatisfied nor satisfied with their current job situation. On the contrary, 26 per cent of the graduates were very satisfied while about 22 per cent were dissatisfied.

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings of this study have revealed that whereas most of the B.Com graduates stayed either alone in apartments or together with family, most of the B.Ed. graduates shared an apartment or hostel with friends and none of them lived with family. It is however not clear whether the rate of completion of studies could be attributed either to the living conditions, the financing styles or the mode of study considering that the B.Com programme is run on a trimester system while that of the B.Ed. is run on a semester system. It is important to note that majority of the B.Ed. graduates depended on higher education loans board (HELB) to finance their education while nearly all the B.Com graduates used their own or family resources to finance their education. The findings also revealed that more than half of the graduates did not have access to ICT facilities at the university while only nearly one third of those who had access to ICT had some knowledge in accessing learning resources. Moreover, library facilities were rated below average with availability of e-resources and adequacy of library space being rated as very bad based on the views of graduates from the satellite campus. Furthermore, majority of graduates agreed that the most prevalent method of teaching and learning was through the lecture method. Moreover, majority of the respondents opined that e-learning and integration of ICT in teaching were not used at all during their period of study. The study also found that due to the competition in the labour market, majority of students start looking for employment prior to completion of their studies. On average, however, it took a graduate about 10 months to get a job. Furthermore, relevance of the programme of study was cited as the most significant factor in influencing graduate employment. However, majority (86 per cent) of the B.Com graduates took additional training in order to improve their employment chances. Moreover, corruption and limited jobs in the area of specialization were cited as the most challenging aspects when looking for a job. It was further revealed that even though most skills acquired at the university were relevant and highly utilized in the work place, university contribution towards the attainment of ICT skills was low in spite of the skill being highly utilized at the work place.

According to a report of the Public Universities Inspection Board (Republic of Kenya, 2006), quality and quantity of teaching and learning materials and information technologies in particular, impact in a very significant

way on the quality of teaching and research. It is important to note that availability of study facilities plays a critical role in quality provision of university education. However, as observed by Cheboi (2006), the provision of physical facilities in universities is inadequate hence affecting quality. According to World Bank (2000), the lack of physical facilities is occasioned by inadequate financial resources channelled to universities. Today, the integration of ICT in the teaching and learning process has helped revitalize the teaching and learning process. However, as can be seen, the university has not been able to build proper ICT infrastructure to support the ICT integrated methodologies in teaching. Indeed as Manyasi (2010) observes, most universities in Kenya lack computer assisted infrastructure to support teaching and learning. Eshiwani (2009) decries the fact that most universities in Kenya while having opened many satellite campuses lack resources for non-salary related expenditure such as textbooks and journals. Okwakol (2008) observes that although libraries in most universities are stocked with textbooks and journals, they are antiquated. Similarly, Ndethiu (2007) in a study at Kenyatta University found that lack of adequate reading resources posed a challenge to the promotion of students' reading habits. Additionally, he found that important constraints to students' reading included; lack of current and relevant books, inadequate use of internet as well as general lack of reading space were. The importance of using computers cannot be gainsaid. Okwakol (2008) notes that universities that do not leverage on the use of computer assisted technology cannot deliver quality. However, as Manyasi (2010) observed, most universities in Kenya lack necessary ICT support infrastructure implying that quality in teaching is greatly affected. Gudo, Olel and Oanda (2011) have pointed out that when universities do not have adequate library facilities, the quality of teaching and learning is negatively affected and consequently lower the quality of the graduates.

In view of the findings, the study recommends among other things that: the university makes concerted efforts towards integrating ICT in teaching and learning for quality curriculum delivery; the university needs to expand library space and stock relevant resources for library users, especially in the satellite campuses; efforts be made to review the B.Com curricular in order to incorporate relevant content as per the needs of the industry so as to increase the chances of employability of the graduates without necessarily having them undertake additional courses; there is need to have placement cells for students and consequently strengthen the alumni office and career offices/or placement cells to guide students on employment opportunities; and there is need to strengthen academic advising in the university as a way of mentoring the students.

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