



RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Impact of Expansion of the Privately Sponsored Students Programme on the Quality of Education offered at Moi University, Kenya

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Abstract

This paper examines the expansion and quality of parallel programmes in Kenya's public Universities based on a study of PSSP programmes at the Moi University and its satellite campuses in Kenya. The research was descriptive in nature and ex-post facto research design was adopted. The study sample consisted of 460 privately sponsored students from all schools and campuses of Moi University and 140 teaching and non-teaching staff. A stratified random sampling procedure was used to identify the schools and the students while purposive sampling was used on the staff. The data was collected using questionnaires for students and staff and interview guides for administrators of schools and satellite campuses. The findings of the study were that the quality of programmes offered under PSSP in Moi University as well as all other programmes have been compromised by the expansion in terms of increase in students' number and satellite campuses. PSSP programmes and Moi university programmes are one and the same. The PSSP students were found to have qualified to join the university and were taught by the same lecturers as the regular students. The study recommended that since the quality of programmes in Public universities has declined, universities should invest in facilities, activities and infrastructure that support learning/teaching which is the university's core mandate. Secondly that they need to adhere to the established quality regulatory mechanisms to assure stakeholders of the quality of the education offered at universities. The recommendations from the study should be utilized by policy makers in Public Universities in a bid to meet the demand for quality education in those universities.

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Introduction

In the past, the Kenya government financed the development and operations of Higher Education (HE) because HE is seen as a global public good and it is only right that the state bears the biggest burden for payment of operating costs of the universities^[1]. Due to public demand and human capital theory, HE has undergone considerable expansion and as of 2010 there were a total of thirty (30) public and private universities serving a student population of 200,000. The enrolment rose from 571 students in 1963 to 91,541 students in 2006 and almost 90% are in public

universities^[2]. This trend is due to several factors including demographic growth, significant advances in the provision of primary and secondary education hence, more young people become eligible to seek admission in HE and also the realization that HE is a key instrument not only for an individual's future economic development but also for their social, cultural and political functioning in a rapidly changing society in use of knowledge and technology^[3].

However, these rapid enrolments have not been matched by expansion in educational facilities and

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teaching staff thereby compromising quality of HE^[4]. The expansion of university education has experienced a crisis – deteriorating quality and relevance, unsustainable financing, limited research, low staff morale and the struggle between regular and parallel degree programmes^[5]. The rapid expansion has also led to a rise in educational costs. The student's loan scheme, the Higher Education Loans Board (HELB), has not been able to deal with the swiftly increasing student numbers. It has been observed that low incomes, especially in the rural parts of Kenya, have made it difficult for students to afford university education and therefore the expansion of HE has a direct impact on financing and utilization of physical resources^[6].

Shortage of academic staff has also been an issue in financing HE. The decline in state funding has had a major impact on teaching resulting in poor service delivery. Poor remuneration evidenced by constant strikes and salaries that often come late have demoralized lecturers. Many are decamping to foreign universities and research institutions thereby contributing to the much touted brain drain currently affecting many institutions of higher learning in Kenya^[7],^[8]. The World Bank estimates that some 23,000 qualified academic staff are emigrating from Africa each year in search of better working conditions^[9],^[10]. The massive brain drain experienced in universities is due to better remuneration packages offered by foreign and regional universities.

In addition, some staff members go for further studies outside the country and do not come back upon completion of their studies^[11]. Kenyan Public Universities have therefore been forced to use part-time lecturers and to hastily upgrade the Masters' staff they employ to fill the gap^[12]. On the same issue of brain drain, it is noted that universities do not have the capacity and ability to supervise the increasing numbers of campuses effectively and this compromises the quality of academic standards in these institutions^[5]. Both public and private universities are neither employing the teaching staff permanently or on contract basis, casting uncertainty on their commitment to research and knowledge development. A survey carried out by the Commission for Higher Education (CHE)^[13] reveals that though the seven public universities have not been adversely affected by the issue of part-time staff, their constituent colleges recruiting lecturers with low qualifications teaching on part-time basis have been greatly affected. The same survey came up with information that lecturers robbed students of real university education in these campuses because they are always on the move teaching between campuses and come to class late and often exhausted:

Consider a lecturer who has been travelling all over the country teaching in other institutions, and he enters your class 30 minutes late. Not only will he lack time to research on the subject leading to repetition of content but he will also have shallow presentations^[14].

Therefore, although major public universities like Nairobi, Moi and Kenyatta do not have many part-time lecturers on staff, those on full-time basis in these institutions tend to be the ones employed on part-time by other institutions and therefore move between the satellite, other universities campuses and the university's main campus.

University education in Kenya has recorded phenomenal growth in the past two decades. First, the expansion of public universities to admit increased numbers of school leavers, followed by the parallel degree courses for those who missed out due to the high cut-off point criteria largely driven by availability of bed space. During the last two decades, universities started springing up and, though this was initially controlled by stringent accreditation rules by CHE, things have since changed and the growth is almost uncontrollable and does not match the resource provisions. Minimal infrastructural changes, including hiring of extra space outside the university as extension for classroom space, have yet to match the rising numbers. Stalled housing projects within the universities still remain as such^[11],^[15],^[16].

Inadequate facilities, including libraries, modern electronic and technological infrastructure, and high student staff ratio, hinder the universities efforts of attaining demand for high quality services and the implication is that academic standards have been compromised in pursuit of entrepreneurship. Stakeholders concerns are that universities are moving more into a market-driven system rather than producing knowledge for the benefit of society. This is because prestigious courses such as Medicine, Engineering and Law, previously reserved for students with a minimum of grade 'A', have been opened up to parallel degree students with up to 'C+'. Parallel degree programmes have opened the way to those who have qualified and can afford to enrol for the courses of their choice. It is therefore possible that the quality of education has been watered down, a trend that could prove costly for the job industry in future.

It is observed that world class universities are characterized by excellence in research, top quality academic staff, favourable working conditions, academic freedom and atmosphere of intellectual excitement and adequate funding, which is what is ailing Kenyan Public Universities to this day^[17]. Until the onset of the parallel degree programmes,

Kenyan public universities used to practically operate within deficits and so the parallel degree programmes provided the badly needed money and, instead of putting the funds into improving the academic environment for those paying for it, it is invested in projects that do not have direct relevance to the core functions of the university, at the expense of more realistic and crucial academic ventures, making the university more of a business entity. Such projects as water bottling plants, treasury bonds, beach hotels and textile factory are only examples visible and highlighted and not funding an academic research in such crucial areas as HIV/AIDS and cancer treatment.

Duplication of courses and cut-throat competition between the universities is another factor worth noting in the growth and expansion of HE. Moi University, for example, established in 1984 was to specialize in Science and Technology courses, but along the way it began to enrol students for Education and Arts based courses. This is in response to the demand for these courses from the market. Other issues worth mentioning, as articulated in African Association of Universities are: political interference, poor quality of students and paucity of contemporary programmes and poor leadership^[18]. These are the challenges encountered by public universities in providing degree programmes and which impact greatly on the quality of the degrees eventually awarded to the graduates.

As a result, there has been a marked decrease in the proportion of the country's national budget allocated to the recurrent expenditure of education^[19]. Ironically, higher education still enjoys the luxury of generous funding compared to other levels of education in Kenya. In 1997, for example, national recurrent expenditure per student in public universities was 42 times higher than that for a primary school student^[20]. Besides, over 50 percent of the government's development budget for capital investments was allocated to the sector^[21]. When the recurrent and capital budgets of the Ministry of Education are taken together, the unit cost for higher education stands 68 times higher than the unit cost for primary education^[19].

The investment the government has made in the higher education sector hitherto seems quite commendable, though the trend does not continue^[19] because of the ever increasing pressure for structural adjustment by the World Bank and other donors aside, the tertiary education sector itself has been questioned internally for its limited capacity to provide access to most eligible Kenyans. This limited participation in higher education has been compounded by gender; for example, in 1995 only 37 percent of students enrolled in higher education were

women^[22]. Added together, thus, the performance of higher education in Kenya is contestable both on equity and efficiency grounds. Austerity in the public budget for higher education, coupled with the poor performance of the sector in promoting access and equity, led the government of Kenya to intensify the mechanisms for cost-sharing and user charges in higher education. The study, that informs this paper, sought to establish if these massive enrolments under parallel degree programmes and rapid establishment of satellite campuses have compromised the quality of education offered.

Statement of the Problem

In a bid to respond to the increasing need for higher education, public universities in Kenya have enacted numerous changes in their operations to meet the demand for Higher Education and conduct research that addresses social, economic and political challenges. Parallel degree programmes, since their introduction a little over a decade ago, have also grown tremendously and continue to produce a huge number of graduates into the job market. The stakeholders in education and especially parents would like to see the government come up strongly to regulate the setting up of new universities and colleges to ensure that Kenyans get an education and training acceptable anywhere in the world. As a result of these developments, concern is rising among stakeholders of Higher Education^[23] with regard to quality of the products of these universities. The quality of graduates from universities is dependent on the quality of the admitted students, the quality of programmes on offer, the quality of teaching supported by other resources such as libraries, laboratories, and the quality of both human and resource management in the individual university^[4]. This paper examines the rapid expansion of Moi University and the effect it has had on the programmes being offered with the aim of finding out whether or not quality is still being maintained.

Quality Assurance Mechanisms in Education

The term quality has been borrowed from the industrial sector and is often used to assess educational programmes^[24]. Generally, the quality of a product or a service is described as a degree of excellence, the extent to which it is fit for its purpose, conformance with requirement and a degree of customer satisfaction. This concept of quality on anything, be it a product or service, has to do with psychological expectation of the users or consumers towards performance or achievement of the desired results. Against this background, there must be knowledge on the expected results against some benchmarks. In the field of academia, the term

'benchmark' refers to a standard that allows no compromise and whose end result is the production of desired outcomes.

According to UNESCO, the term quality in education is a dynamic concept that changes and evolves with time and takes many forms since world societies are also dynamic ^[25]. The Inter-University Council of East Africa (IUCEA) in collaboration with German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) argue that quality does not exist in higher education but for the sake of common understanding and standardization among universities in East African region, quality has been described as achieving set goals and aims in an efficient way while bearing in mind that these goals reflect the requirements of the stakeholders who have their varied ideas on quality ^[26]. Stakeholders in education refer to government, employers, students, parents and society at large.

The IUCEA further recommends that each university should check and assure the public of its quality by having it assessed by outsiders ^[26]. This calls for clearly set standards and criteria of benchmarks against which a university's quality education can be assessed. The quality aspects to be assessed include, but are not limited to, the curriculum content, design implementation, learning strategies, teaching and non-teaching staff, students, entry qualification to the programmes, staff/student ratio, internal quality assurance mechanisms, student support services, staff development programmes and teacher testing stakeholder satisfaction student assessment procedures; physical facilities and infrastructure.

The IUCEA recommends that for quality standards to be maintained in universities, programme specifications should be clear ^[26]. The course designers must carry out a needs assessment before settling down to draw course requirements. Course objectives should be clearly stated and in line with national goals of education in the country. They must also reflect the aspirations of the institution. In attempts to ensure provision of quality education the courses designed by the academic department need to be approved by the relevant academic authorities of the institutions for appropriateness.

Quality teaching/learning embraces virtues such as responsibility, and commitment ^[26]. Universities must adopt teaching/learning strategies that appropriately suit the programme designed. Effective teaching strategies involve having basic principles and procedures required by the subject, proper preparation and planning of the lesson, careful selection and use of teaching/learning resources, flexibility, self reflection and modification of the

teaching learning techniques ^[27]. A number of problems may be faced when teaching students, so that quality becomes harder to maintain as class size increases ^[28]. Courses with smaller numbers of students can afford to achieve clarity of purpose and aim through contact with lecturers.

To be able to plan, implement and monitor quality in education, the following must be taken into consideration: quality of the students, quality of the curriculum, assessment and grading procedures, quality and adequacy of staff, infrastructure and academic environment, academic support systems to include laboratories, libraries, internet facilities students' welfare support services and Directorate of Quality Assurance.

Quality of the PSSP Student on Admission

Quality education depends a lot on the quality of students enrolled in the courses and programmes of study. The IUCEA points out that every university that seeks to attain quality education should observe the kind of students enrolled in various courses in the university and set clearly formulated criteria for all programmes ^[26]. As such, when there is a selection and admission, the procedure and criteria should be clear, adequate and transparent. It is now evident that public universities have programmes that accommodate even the academically weak students because the academic excellence that these universities should nurture has been eroded by the entrepreneurship approach to recruitment of students by some universities.

A lecturer from the University of Nairobi observes that there is nothing wrong with opening up university education because increasing numbers does not bring down quality as long as the quality regulatory mechanisms are observed. The lecturer notes that a university is a place where people come to exchange ideas and carry out research that adds to knowledge thus opening doors for mass admission should be encouraged.

Limitations of the Study

The study was limited to PSSP students, academic staff and non-teaching staff of Moi University and its satellite campuses. The Moi University Town campuses under the study included the Eldoret West Campus, and the School of Law (Annex) and Chepkoilel Campus. The satellite campuses were Kitale campus, Odera Akang'o campus, Yala, Southern Nyanza campus, Rongo, Kericho campus, Central Kenya campus, Karatina, Coast Campus and Nairobi Campus.

It is acknowledged that this study is centred on only one institution, Moi University, which is by no means

representative of the vast higher education sector in Kenya. However, the author considered that an in-depth study of one institution would most likely yield more detailed information about the parallel degree programmes than would a wide coverage of institutions surveyed through a general questionnaire. PSSP as subject of research among the respondents was a sensitive issue, as it touches on the livelihoods of those interviewed. Location and distances of Moi University Campuses posed a challenge in terms of travelling to reach them and the funds used by the author to gather data.

There are many other factors that determine quality of education in higher education that was not catered for in this study. The study concerned itself with empirical questions relating to equitable access to knowledge creation and dissemination of academic quality of PSSP programmes and the generation of income for improvement of the academic environment of the university and other purposes as identified by the individual institutions.

Material and Methods

The study was carried out at the Moi University located in Eldoret and six of its satellite campuses, namely Chepkoilel Campus, Kericho Campus, Coast Campus, Nairobi Campus, Central Kenya Campus, Yala and Southern Nyanza Campus – Rongu. The University is located on the Western part of Kenya, in Eldoret Town, 300 Km northwest of Nairobi the capital city of Kenya. The decision to choose Moi University did not however underscore the importance of the other public universities which could produce the same results. It is also important to note that of the seven public universities, Moi University has been expanding most rapidly by acquiring satellite campuses in all the provinces of Kenya. It also has been at the forefront in creating constituent colleges some of which have become fully fledged public universities such as Maseno and Masinde Muliro universities.

This study used the *ex post facto* design to investigate the effect of expansion of the privately sponsored students programme on quality efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of higher education without manipulation. The study embraced a mixed methods approach where both qualitative and quantitative approaches were used to gather data. The study sought to draw the benefits of each of these approaches by combining two research tools, as well as, combination of data analysis techniques. The questionnaires, critical tools in quantitative approach, enabled the study to gain data that is numerical in nature while the interviews, which are predominantly qualitative, yielded in depth and rich descriptions of

the university staff experiences and feelings towards the PSSP programmes.

The target population for the study was all the PSSP students (11,185) enrolled in the academic year 2009/2010 in all the schools that have these programmes in Moi University. This comprised students integrated with the regular students and those who were learning on their own as PSSP students. Also targeted were all staff, academic staff and non-teaching in these programmes, deans of participating schools, heads of departments and administrators of satellite campuses who handle PSSP programmes. University staff is strategically important in implementing the mission and vision of the university and are therefore an important part of the study sample.

The use of different schools was adopted to provide a representative sample of the population from Moi University and raise external validity of the study. The schools were selected through simple random sampling. From each school, three (3) departments were selected randomly. Therefore, a total of twenty-four (24) departments were considered. All the academic staff in the selected departments was requested to participate in the study. Students were selected through systematic sampling. A total of 460 students were selected. Forty-four (44) academic staff and fifty-nine (59) administrative staff involved in teaching PSSP programmes was sampled using random sampling procedures. Twelve (12) PSSP coordinators, six (6) deans of schools, two (2) directors of PSSP and senior PSSP coordinators and 7 satellite campus administrators 2 satellite campus directors, ten (10) heads of departments were purposively sampled for in-depth interviews. In total, one hundred and forty (140) teaching and non-teaching staff members were interviewed.

Primary data was collected using questionnaires for key informants. The data collected was coded and tabulated before using statistical package of social sciences (SPSS) for data analysis. Descriptive statistics such as means, standard deviations and frequencies were used in the analysis. Inferential statistics, ANOVA was utilized at a level of significance of 0.05.

Result and Discussion

The Type and Quality of PSSP Students during Admission

The findings in the table below indicate that 164(39.5%) of the PSSP students got B- in their KCSE examinations, suggesting that many PSSP students were averagely qualified to join university as PSSP students, since most Kenyan universities enroll

students who have attained grade C+ for a PSSP undergraduate admission. In addition, 138(33.3%) of the PSSP students had grade B in their KCSE exams.

Table 1: Students' Demographic Data

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Gender	Male	254	61.2	61.2	61.2
	Female	161	38.8	38.8	100
	Total	415	100	100	
Year of Study	First	25	6	6	6
	Second	86	20.7	20.7	26.7
	Third	111	26.7	26.7	53.5
	Fourth	193	46.6	46.6	100
	Total	415	100	100	
Mean scores	B	138	33.3	33.3	33.3
	B-	164	39.5	39.5	72.8
	B+	35	8.4	8.4	81.2
	C+	78	18.8	18.8	100
	Total	415	100	100	

Source: Survey data, 2012

Table 2: How PSSP Students Finance their Education

	Frequency (N=391)	Percent
Personal savings	118	28.4
Loan from credit and savings society	22	5.3
Loan from the government (HELB)	89	21.4
Other sources of funding	162	39
Total	391	94.2

Source: Survey data, 2012

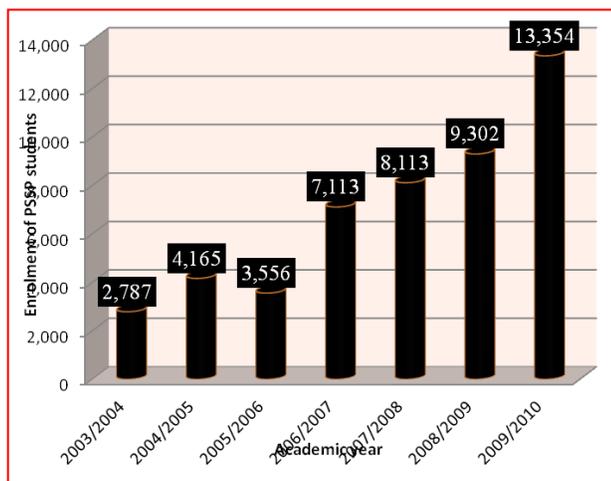


Figure 1: Growth of PSSP Programmes in Moi University
Source: Survey data, 2012

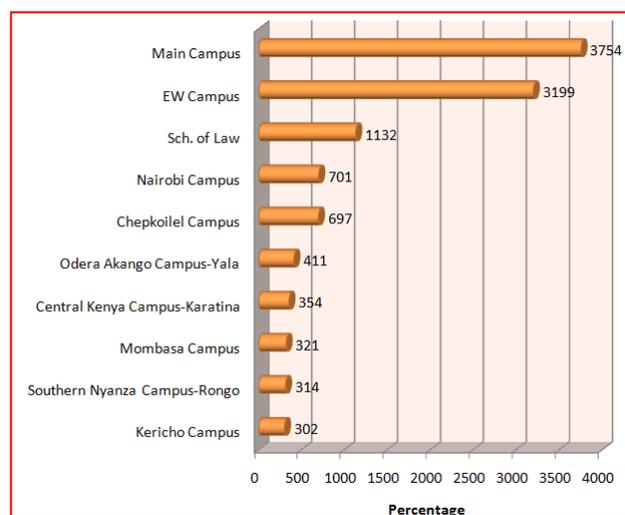


Figure 2: PSSP programmes in Moi University Satellites Campuses
Source: Survey data, 2012

According to JAB, the cut-off points for university entry for regular students averagely is 64 which is grade B; however, the marks differ from year to year depending on JAB cut-off points for the particular year. This implies that the students were qualified to join university as regular students but were locked out by the cut off points which vary every year depending on performance. All of the 415 respondents in the study were found to have attained the grade C+ and above which supports the university's policy of admitting students who meet the minimum entry requirements of C+.

The author found it necessary to find out if the PSSP students were integrated together with regular students. The study findings indicate that 327(79%) of the PSSP students reported to have been attending lectures with regular students, while 98(21%) of the students did not attend their lectures together with the regular students. Integration of students at the Moi University was seen for science-based courses and also at the request of the student for their convenience. The PSSP students pay their full study fees for themselves and as such the study sought to know how the PSSP students financed their education.

The table above illustrates sources of funds for the education of PSSP students. It shows that 162(39%) of the PSSP students paid for their study from other sources such as parents/guardians, donors, well-wishers, non-governmental organizations and constituency development fund. Personal savings, loans from credit and savings societies and loans from the government are other sources cited by the respondents. A hundred and eighteen (28.4%) of the PSSP students paid their schools fees from their personal savings. Only 89(21.4%) of the PSSP students got loans from HELB, which suggests that despite HELB introducing a programmes of offering loan to parallel degree students many PSSP students are not benefitting from it. Twenty-two (5.3%) of the PSSP students got loans from credit and saving societies to pay their school fees.

The study also sought to establish if the academic staff who participated in the study taught both regular and PSSP students. Seventy-one percent of academic staff (lecturers) taught both regular and PSSP students contrary to 29% of them reporting that they only taught regular students. This means that integration among students in Moi University is evident and PSSP students have the opportunity of being taught by the same lecturers and being offered the same service as regular students in any campus they are based in.

Expansion of PSSP Programmes in Moi University

The PSSP programmes were introduced into Moi University in October 1998 for purposes of increasing opportunities for university education in Kenya. These programmes are now admitting all eligible students at fees charged to sustain the various activities involved. The figure below shows the steady increase in PSSP students' enrolment at Moi University from the 2003/2004 academic year to 2009/2010 academic year.

The study findings from the figure 1 above show that from the academic year 2006/2007 there was a sharp increase from 7,113 PSSP students enrolled in academic year 2007 to 13,354 PSSP students enrolled in academic year 2009/2010. This is an indication of the popularity of these programmes.

Results from the figure 2 above show that main campus had the highest number of PSSP students (3,754), followed closely by Eldoret West campus with 3,199. Nairobi campus had 701 PSSP students, and Chepkoilel had 697 PSSP students. This shows that PSSP programmes have expanded to all the satellite campuses contrary to 9 years ago when it was only Moi University Main Campus which was offering the said Programmes.

In general, many of the PSSP students scored well in their KCSE examinations. All of them had attained the acceptable grade in Kenya's public universities for admission into an undergraduate programme. This therefore means that the PSSP students admitted to Moi University were averagely qualified to join the Moi University.

The increased enrolment in all the campuses of Moi University is centrally processed by the admission office of the University which issues the admission letters to the students that have met the minimum qualifications of the programmes they have applied to undertake. Therefore, on the case of quality of the student on admission, it has been established that Moi University adheres to the quality of the student on admission.

The study further established that most of the respondents attended lectures together with GSSP students. Similarly the study established that majority of the lecturers taught both regular and PSSP students. This means that majority of the PSSP students admitted to Moi University are integrated together with the GSSP students. The author therefore concluded that the expansion has not compromised the quality of PSSP programmes at

Moi University because the standards applied to GSSP also apply to PSSP students. Therefore, what has been decried as university expansion experiencing a crisis due to deteriorating quality and relevance, unsustainable financing and limited research is true of university education in general but not specific to PSSP^[5], because these programmes at Moi University are generally integrated and cannot be looked at in isolation.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the study findings, it is evident that the PSSP students admitted to study programmes at Moi University meet the minimum entry requirements for the University. It is also clear that a high percentage of PSSP students in all Moi University campuses are integrated. They learn together, are taught by the same lecturers and undertake the same continuous assessment tests as well as final examinations. As a result it can be said that PSSP programmes, on their own, are not compromised. Instead, all the programmes offered under Moi University are affected by declining quality as feared by the stakeholders. This case applies to all other public universities in Kenya and East Africa as observed by Prof. Nkanyike Musisi, a leading social scientist at Makerere University, that:

a recent evaluation by a joint university-government committee showed that two small universities in Uganda: Uganda Martyrs University and Islamic University provide better and quality education than Makerere University^[8].

University councils and management boards in public universities need to urgently address the issue of declining quality of university education, irrespective of the nature of the programmes offered. Whether this is caused by increase in student population through parallel degree programmes or by laxity in adhering to enforcement of the mechanisms that ensure quality, is a different matter. Poor infrastructure and congestion result from admitting students without due regard to available facilities. This is a recipe for student unrest, strikes and possible destruction of property. As such, it falls upon all the stakeholders to engage with the issues of trying to ensure that a majority of Kenyan citizens' access education do not compromise on the quality of the very education provided.

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