



Graduates' Perception of University Programmes and Their Relevance to Employment: University of Nairobi (1991-1998)

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Abstract

This paper reports a study to assess graduates' perception of the learning conditions and provisions at the University of Nairobi, Kenya. The study identified the jobs held by the graduates and the extent to which they use knowledge, attitudes and skills acquired during their study at the University of Nairobi in their present jobs. The sample consisted of 1,640 graduates drawn from 3,300 graduates of Bachelor of Education (Arts), Bachelor of Science and Bachelor of Commerce degree programmes who had completed their studies between 1991 and 1998. Questionnaires were sent to 1,400 graduates and some 240 others were administered directly to respondents. A total of 580 questionnaires were returned representing a return rate of 35.4 per cent. The findings show that overall the scope and coverage of the courses, teaching quality of lectures and contact with students were the most highly rated aspects of study conditions and provisions of the University of Nairobi. Counseling services, catering facilities on the campus and recreational facilities were the lowly rated aspects. About 61 per cent of graduates were employed in public sector while 37 per cent were in private sector. About 2 per cent were self-employed. Of the surveyed graduates 72 per cent indicated that they used knowledge and skills acquired at the university to a high or very high extent while 25 per cent indicated moderate use. Only 3 per cent responded to the contrary.

Résumé

Cette contribution porte sur une étude destinée à recueillir l'avis des diplômés sur les conditions d'étude, à l'Université de Nairobi, au Kenya. Dans ce cadre, les emplois occupés par ces diplômés ont été identifiés, de même que leur utilisation au niveau de leur actuel emploi, des connaissances, comportements et du savoir-faire acquis

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au cours de leur séjour dans cette l'université. L'échantillon sélectionné regroupait 1 640 diplômés, choisis parmi les 3 300 détenteurs d'une Licence en éducation (département Lettres et Sciences Humaines), en sciences et en commerce, ayant achevé leur cycle d'études entre 1991 et 1998. Des questionnaires ont été envoyés aux 1 400 diplômés et 240 autres ont été directement soumis aux personnes sondées. Un total de 580 questionnaires a été retourné, ce qui représente un taux de retour de 35,4 pour cent. Globalement, les résultats ont révélé que l'étendue et les champs couverts par les cours, ainsi que la qualité pédagogique des cours magistraux et les contacts établis avec les élèves constituaient les éléments les mieux notés. Les services de conseil, les infrastructures de restauration et de loisirs représentaient les éléments les moins bien notés. Environ 61 pour cent des diplômés avaient rejoint le secteur public, tandis que 37 pour cent évoluaient dans le secteur privé. Environ 2 pour cent travaillaient à leur compte. Parmi les diplômés interrogés, 72 pour cent ont affirmé se servir souvent voire beaucoup des connaissances et du savoir-faire acquis à l'université de Nairobi, tandis que 25 pour cent ont déclaré s'en servir de façon modérée. Seuls 3 pour cent ont indiqué le contraire.

Introduction: Background to the study

Over the last two decades the Kenyan education system has been characterised by a very rapid expansion. At higher education levels the number of public universities has increased from one in 1980 to six in 2002. In terms of enrollment, in the 1963/64 academic year there were 571 students at the University College, Nairobi. The number increased to 3404 students in 1970/71 while in 1983/84 the number rose to 9044 (Rok 1988). With the establishment of three more public universities in the 1980s the enrollment increased sharply to 20817 students by the 1987/88 academic year (Rok 1994). Presently, more than 40,000 students are enrolled in the six public universities in the country.

The rapid expansion of university education has created many problems. Some of these problems include:

- Overcrowding and strain in available facilities as a result of double intakes in 1987/88 and 1990/91 in order to eliminate the backlog and accommodate both 7-4-2-3 and 8-4-4 school system candidates (these figures refer to years in primary, secondary and other education).
- Deterioration of the quality of education as a result of resource scarcity, overworked academic staff, lack of physical facilities, equipment, library facilities etc.
- Frequent closures of public universities which have lengthened the duration of academic programme completion beyond the normal time and
- The inability of economy to absorb high level manpower produced by universities (Ministry of Education 1995).

From the 1990s, Kenya like most other African countries, has been experiencing financial difficulties due to poor economic performance. The economy has been unable to grow at a rate that would create enough jobs for the growing labour force from universities and other education and training institutions (Republic of Kenya 1999). The country's political and development programmes have been unable to focus on areas with the greatest employment creation potential. Indeed, since 1994, there has been a large-scale retrenchment of workers from the civil service (which was a major employer of university graduates) due to economic stagnation (Republic of Kenya 1995). This has led to high unemployment rates among graduates due to the mismatch between available job opportunities and number of graduates produced by the universities.

A major area of concern regarding university education for the parents, educational administrators and public has been the relevance and quality of training provided to graduates. There has been a lack of a clear relationship between university education and the potential employment opportunities. In a Graduate Labour Market study done in 1994, a former university graduate summarised the feelings of other graduates by stating:

I feel most of the courses on campus are irrelevant. Admissions have been politicized and interfered with and general standards are on the decline ... The sheer numbers at the university and lack of enough and appropriate facilities made the training inadequate'.

A report commissioned by the World Bank on Cost and Financing of Tertiary Education (1995) acknowledged that reform was required. The report stated:

Academic programmes in the universities need review. There are non-existent mechanisms for quality assessment and assurance of existing programmes. Most programmes have not evolved with changes in technology and workplace (Ministry of Education 1995).

In the University of Nairobi, no reliable data exist on the employment of its graduates nor have the view of students and employers been ascertained as to the relevance and usefulness of programmes offered. This study attempted to fill this gap.

Purpose of the study

A major objective of the University of Nairobi has been to train and prepare high level manpower needed for the development of the country. In line with this objective, this study was conducted to:

- assess graduate's perception of the study conditions and provisions while at the university.

- examine the transition from higher education/university to employment from the graduate's perspective.
- identify the present job status of the graduates and the extent to which their jobs are appropriate to their level of education.
- determine the extent to which graduates use knowledge, attitudes and skills acquired during their study at the university in their present jobs.

Research methodology

(a) Population and sampling

The target population for this study comprised 3 300 graduates of Bachelor of Education (Arts), Bachelor of Science and Bachelor of Commerce degree programmes who had completed their studies between 1991 and 1998 at the University of Nairobi. Due to inconsistencies in placement/employment records no sampling was done. However the study targeted at least 50 per cent of the graduates from each cohort from the faculties of external studies (education), science, and commerce.

(b) Strategies for tracing graduates

The task of tracing graduates was labour-intensive. It involved studying the records of graduates at their former university, at the Higher Education Loans Board (HELB) and at employers. Records from the employers were particularly useful for those who completed their studies from 1995 to 1998. They were however less useful for those who completed their studies between 1991 to 1994 due to factors such as transfers and change of names. The snowball technique was by far the most useful method of tracing the graduates. After graduates were traced by the above mentioned method, they were mailed a letter requesting their assistance in locating other graduates from their year or other cohorts. Each letter included a form containing space for thirty of the graduates' names, institution they were working for, telephone of work place and residence. From the 80 responses received about 950 graduates were located through this method. In total 1640 graduates were traced.

(c) Data collection instruments

Data were collected through the use of a questionnaire. The data collected was on graduates social-biographical data, course of study at the university, transition from university to employment, and current employment status. It also contained items on assessment of work and employment and further training/education undertaken since graduation among other items. The questionnaire was adapted from the one developed by Harald Schomburg at the Centre for Higher Education and Work, University of Kassel, Germany.

(d) Data collection and analysis procedures

Questionnaires were sent to 1400 graduates. Some 240 other questionnaires were administered directly to the respondents. In total 580 questionnaires were returned. Of the returned questionnaires 69 were not properly filled in. These were discarded and not included in the data analysis. The return rate of the questionnaires was 35.4 percent.

After collection of the data, a codebook was developed. Data were coded and entered into SPSS data files. The results for each question were cross-tabulated against year of graduation, course undertaken at the university and gender.

Study findings***Characteristics of the graduates***

Of the 511 graduates studied, their age ranged from 24 to 55 years. About 63 percent of the graduates were between 25 and 35 years. The bulk of these graduates studied science and commerce courses and were admitted to university direct from school unlike education graduates. Students admitted in the faculty of external studies to study for the Bachelor of Education degree were required to have worked for three years as teachers before joining the programme. In terms of gender, 74 percent of the respondents were men and 26 percent women. Based on the actual number of students admitted over the period 1991-1998 there was a proper gender balance in the study. Among the 499 respondents who replied to the item on marital status, 43 percent were single and 57 percent were married. Nearly all education graduates (91 percent) were married. This large number was attributed to the fact that all of them joined the Bachelor of Education programme at a mature age. Out of 263 graduates who indicated the number of children they had, 84 percent had between one and four children. About 16 percent had more than five children; and 86 percent had more than two children.

Data on religious affiliation indicated that the majority of the graduates were Protestants (53 percent) followed by Catholics (42 percent), 4 percent Moslems while the rest (Hindu, Animist etc.) constituted 1 percent. About 15 percent of the graduates in the study held administrative positions within their religious organisations.

Graduates' assessment of study conditions and provisions at the University of Nairobi

The graduates' responses toward various aspects of the study provisions and conditions by field of study are presented in Table 1. Analysis of the results indicates an average rating of various aspects of study provisions and

conditions. Overall, irrespective of the area of study, the scope and coverage of courses (68 percent), teaching quality of lectures (65 percent) and contacts with fellow students were the most highly rated aspects. Other well-rated aspects were testing/grading system in examinations (61 percent), the structure of degree programmes (61 percent), and adequacy of teaching staff and assistance/advice offered during final examinations (56 percent). These findings indicate that generally graduates were satisfied with the academic aspects of their degree programme.

The results on the supportive and physical facilities provided at the university indicate that they were lowly rated by the graduates. Counseling services (20 percent), catering facilities on the campus (21 percent), availability of technical equipment such as personal computers, and measuring instruments and so on (23 percent) and recreational facilities (26 percent) were some of the lowly rated aspects of study provisions and conditions at the university. Graduates of education rated these aspects lower compared to those of science and commerce.

The main reason for the low rating of supportive and physical facilities was due to the rapid expansion of enrollment of students at national universities without a corresponding increase in personnel and physical facilities. The Government gave in to public pressure to enroll more students in public universities after they met the minimum admission requirements. However physical facilities and support services were not increased at the corresponding rate of student enrollment.

When graduates were categorised by year of graduation (Table 2) no major difference between the results described above and the results observed were noted. However graduates who completed from 1991-1993 rated more aspects of study conditions and provisions higher than those who completed after 1993. This perhaps was due to the fact that enrollment of students at the University of Nairobi was lower in the early 1990s compared to 1995 and thereafter.

No major difference was observed between male and female assessment of the various aspects of study conditions and provisions. While graduates' assessment of academic aspects of their degree programme was very similar, supportive services and facilities, were rated higher by males, compared to females.

Table 1: Graduates' assessment of study provisions and study conditions at the University of Nairobi by field of study (percent; responses 1 and 2)

	Field of Study			Total
	Education	Science	Commerce	
Assistance/advice for your final examination	66	65	34	56
Opportunity of out of class contacts with teaching staff	39	27	15	27
Academic advice offered	60	29	36	42
Chances to participate in research	30	21	30	27
Teaching quality of lectures	69	77	47	65
Adequacy of teaching staff	55	77	45	59
Quality of teaching staff	46	58	25	43
Scope and coverage of courses	71	72	60	68
Testing/grading system	65	71	48	61
Structure of degree programme	67	61	54	61
Provision of supervised practical work experience	54	35	22	37
Contacts with fellow students	59	72	64	65
Chance for students to have an influence on university policies	24	17	17	20
Availability of technical equipment (e.g. PC, measuring instruments etc.)	18	42	10	23
Quality of equipment of laboratories/workshops (if applicable)	20	52	17	30
Supply of learning materials	57	47	29	45
Supply of teaching materials	49	49	28	42
Equipment and stocking of libraries	34	54	36	41
Accommodation facilities on campus	26	39	46	36
Catering facilities on campus	17	21	24	21
Quality of the buildings	23	51	39	37
Quality opportunities for co-curricular activities	11	45	38	30
Counselling services	7	37	17	20
Games facilities	11	51	38	32
Recreational facilities	13	45	22	26
Count (n)	(184)	(163)	(164)	(511)

Question 3: How do you rate the study provision and study conditions you experienced?
Scale 1 = very good; 5= very bad.

Table 2: Graduates' assessment of study provisions and study conditions at the University of Nairobi by year of graduation (percent; responses 1 and 2)

	Year of Bachelor's degree completion			
	1991-1993	1994-1996	1997-1999	
Assistance/advice for your final examination	50	63	51	56
Opportunity of out of class contacts with teaching staff	26	32	23	27
Academic advice offered	52	39	40	42
Chances to participate in research projects	22	26	33	27
Teaching quality of lectures	60	66	67	65
Adequacy of teaching staff	52	59	64	59
Quality of teaching staff	44	42	45	43
Scope and coverage of courses	73	65	66	68
Testing/grading system in examinations	61	64	59	61
Structure of degree programme	61	61	61	61
Provision of supervised practical work experience	39	43	29	37
Contacts with fellow students	63	58	74	65
Chance for students to have an influence on university policies	22	20	18	20
Availability of technical equipment (e.g. P.C, measuring instruments etc)	21	16	33	23
Quality of equipment of laboratories/workshops (if applicable)	25	22	41	30
Supply of learning materials	59	40	40	45
Supply of teaching materials	48	41	40	42
Equipment and stocking of libraries	43	38	43	41
Accommodation facilities on the campus	48	27	39	36
Catering facilities on the campus	34	14	18	21
Quality of the buildings	45	27	41	37
Quality opportunities for co-curricular activities	23	22	45	30
Counseling services	11	16	30	20
Games facilities	25	26	45	32
Recreational facilities	25	17	37	26
Count (n)	(128)	(207)	(176)	(511)

Question 3: How do you rate the study provision and study conditions you experienced? Scale from 1 = very good to 5 = very bad.

Employment of graduates

Results on employment position of graduates immediately after completion of their degree programme is presented in Table 3. Overall 47 percent of the 453 graduates who responded to this item were employed immediately after completion of the degree programme. About 49 percent were not employed and were seeking employment. Some 2 percent of the respondents were not employed and did not intend to be employed. The year of completion was an important factor in the employment of graduates. The majority of the graduates (72 percent) who completed in the 1991–1993 period were employed or had been employed earlier than completion date. Among those who completed between 1997–1999 only 15 percent were employed immediately. The number of those who were unemployed immediately after graduation depended on the year of completion of degree programme. It increased from the early 1990s onwards.

Table 3: Career after graduation (percent)

	Year of Bachelor's degree completion			
	1991–1993	1994–1996	1997–1999	
Employed	72	59	15	47
Professional training	0	1	2	1
Advanced academic study	0	1	0	0
Not employed, seeking employment	25	38	80	49
Not employed and not intending to be /employed	1	2	3	2
Other	2	0	1	1
Total	100	100	100	100
Count (n)	(114)	(184)	(155)	(453)

Question 4: What was your career status at the time of graduation?

Factors important in the employment of graduates

Factors that were important in the employment of graduates are indicated in Table 4. The three most important factors were field of study (76 percent), subject area/specialisation, and personality (50 percent). The first two factors are interrelated. Personality is perhaps important in the private sector but not a major consideration in the public sector. In the employment of graduate teachers for example, personality is hardly considered. However, field of study and subject/areas of specialisation are a major consideration in their employment. The personality of the individual graduate was important among science and commerce graduates as indicated in Table 4. Other factors

moderately identified as important were grades attained at the university (47 percent), reputation of the university (44 percent), and reputation of the department (33 percent) at the university where one graduated from. Other factors were identified by less than 30 percent of the respondents. Government policy on employment which used to be a major factor is no longer considered very important by the graduates.

**Table 4: Recruitment criteria of the employer
(percent; responses 1 and 2)**

	Field of Study			Total
	Education	Science	Commerce	
Field of study	73	73	81	76
Main focus of subject area/specialization	50	66	82	67
Theme of thesis/projects, if applicable	14	9	10	11
Grades at the university	28	45	62	47
Reputation of the university	26	39	60	44
Reputation of the department	16	35	43	33
Previous work experience	26	29	31	29
Personality	25	70	56	50
Experiences abroad	14	13	5	10
My own world view, religion, etc.	18	14	8	12
Government employment policy	53	12	3	22
Contact/personal connections	14	28	17	19
Religion of ones origin/place of birth	12	4	2	6
Secondary school attended/old boys/girls association	10	5	4	6
Count (n)	(140)	(96)	(153)	(389)

Question 9: In your opinion, how important were the following factors in your being employed? Scale from 1= very important to 5= not at all important.

Employment status

The graduates employment status is presented in Table 5, shows that majority (84 percent) of the graduates'. About 9 percent of the graduates were involved in further professional training or advanced academic study. It is possible that some of those graduates who were in full-time employment were simultaneously studying. Among those not employed 6 percent were seeking employment and 4 percent did not intend to look for employment. The employment status was highly influenced by the year one graduated.

The majority (99 percent) of those who completed during 1991-1993 were in employment. The number in employment decreased as we approached the

end of the 1990s. This can be attributed to the scarcity of job opportunities, particularly in the public sector, and the poor performance of the economy during the second half of the 1990s.

Table 5: Major employment status (percent; multiple responses)

	Field of Study			Total
	Education	Science	Commerce	
Employed (including self-employed, traineeship, etc.)	96	56	96	84
Professional training	9	3	4	6
Advanced academic study	1	6	1	3
Not employed, but seeking employment	1	21	0	6
Without employment, and not intending to be employed (e.g. raising children, illnesses)	1	13	0	4
Other	3	2	4	3
Total (Recent)	111	101	105	106
Count (n)	(160)	(117)	(134)	(411)

Question 12a: What is your current employment status? Major activity?

Kind of employer

Most of the graduates included in our study (61 percent) were employed in the public sector. However, private employers took slightly more than a third (37 percent) of the graduates. About 2 percent indicated that they were self employed or were involved in other activities. The public sector remained the main employer of graduates from the University despite the declining economy. When data were categorised by field of study, it was found that 98 percent of education graduates were employed by the public sector compared to 40 percent of science and 30 percent of commerce graduates. About 69 percent of the commerce and 59 percent of science graduates were employed in the private sector. Only 2 percent of the education graduates were employed in that sector.

Income

The main source of livelihood for the majority of the graduates studied was full time employment. Monthly gross income for the graduates ranged from Kshs. 6500 to Kshs. 300,000 (US\$84–3850). The majority (55 percent) of the graduates' gross monthly salary ranged between Kshs. 15000–Kshs.30000

(US\$ 192–385). Generally the gross monthly income for the graduates was quite low and a reflection of wage-levels in the public sector.

Table 6: Kind of employer (percent)

	Field of Study			Total
	Education	Science	Commerce	
Public employer	98	40	30	61
Private employer	2	53	69	37
Self employed	0	5	1	1
Other	0	2	0	1
Total	100	100	100	100
Count (n)	(170)	(78)	(149)	(397)

Question 17: Please state the kind of your employer? Please tick one item only.

Appropriateness of position and work to level of education

A major objective of this study was to investigate whether the position (appointment) held was appropriate to the respondent's level of education. The findings of this study revealed that most graduates (72 percent for responses 1 and 2) were of the view that the position held was appropriate to their level of education (Table 7). Only 4 percent held a contrary view. The findings indicate that courses taken by the graduates studied were relevant to the world of work.

Table 7: Appropriateness of position and work to level of education (percent; arithmetic mean)

	Field of Study			Total
	Education	Science	Commerce	
Appropriateness of position and work				
1 To a great extent	31	42	27	31
2	50	32	35	41
3	14	15	24	18
4	2	6	10	6
5 Not at all	3	5	4	4
Arithmetic mean	2,0	2,0	2,3	2,1
Count (n)	(179)	(84)	(158)	(421)

Question 32: To what extent is your position and work appropriate to your level of education? Scale from 1 = completely appropriate to 5 = not at all appropriate.

Job requirements and use of qualifications

The provision of relevant skills to graduates is an important consideration in the design and development of a degree programme. It is also taken seriously by employers when considering graduates for employment in their organisations. A list of skills expected to be acquired for various jobs were presented to graduates for them to indicate the extent to which they had acquired them at the time of graduation. The respondents were further asked to indicate the extent to which the skills were required for their present jobs. Each skill was to be rated along a scale of 1 to 5 as indicated in Table 8.

The findings show that graduates had at the time of graduation acquired to a high extent broad general knowledge (83 percent), cross-disciplinary thinking/knowledge (78 percent), field-specific theoretical knowledge (66 percent), and field specific knowledge of methods (59 percent). However graduates did not find themselves qualified in foreign language competency (16 percent), computer skills (24 percent), and in understanding complex social, organisational and technical systems (38 percent). The deficiency in foreign language competency was to be expected, as most organisations do not require it other than competency skills in national languages used for communication. Understanding social, organisational and technical systems usually takes place when one is employed in an organisation and not at the time of graduation. The deficiency in computer skills for the graduates at the time of graduation is of great concern as knowledge in this area is indispensable in the current world.

Table 8: Professional knowledge and skills possessed by graduates at time of graduation (percent; responses 1 and 2)

	Field of Study			Total
	Education	Science	Commerce	
Broad general knowledge	80	87	82	83
Cross-disciplinary thinking/knowledge	80	81	73	78
Field-specific theoretical knowledge	69	72	60	67
Field-specific knowledge of methods	66	59	50	59
Foreign language proficiency	17	18	13	16
Computer skills	26	22	23	24
Understanding complex social, organisational and technical systems	42	26	46	38
Planning, co-ordinating and organizing	56	48	53	53
Applying rules and regulations	59	50	47	52
Economic reasoning	55	52	63	57
Documenting ideas and information's	59	57	62	59
Count (n)	(178)	(141)	(162)	(481)

Question 27a: Please indicate to what extent you had the skills listed below when you graduated. Scale from 1 = to a very high extent to 5 = not at all.

On the issue of skills required in graduates' work, it is worth noting that nearly all the listed skills in Table 9 were required to a high extent. However, foreign language proficiency was not highly required. A comparison of Tables 8 and 9 indicated that there was a gap between the skills graduates had at the time of graduation and those required by their current jobs. The University will need to address this issue when revising its curriculum or in the development of new programmes.

Table 9: Employed graduates' required professional knowledge and skills by field of study (percent; responses 1 and 2)

	Field of Study			Total
	Education	Science	Commerce	
Broad general knowledge	95	70	76	83
Cross-disciplinary thinking/knowledge	95	88	78	87
Field-specific theoretical knowledge	83	70	83	81
Field-specific knowledge methods	77	60	67	70
Foreign language proficiency	27	20	21	23
Computer skills	43	47	67	53
Understanding complex social, organizational and technical systems	70	62	61	65
Planning, Co-ordinating and organising	78	77	75	77
Applying rules and regulations	85	81	82	83
Economic reasoning	79	70	81	78
Documenting ideas and information	82	87	78	81
Count (n)	(173)	(79)	(154)	(406)

Question 27b: Please indicate to what extent the skills are required in your current work. Scale from 1 = to a very high extent to 5 = not at all.

Use of knowledge and skills in current job

Graduates were asked to indicate the extent to which certain elements of their study programme were useful to their current work. The course content of the major subject of study/teaching subject (85 percent) was found to be the most useful element of their current work (Table 10). Other very useful elements of their study programme were opportunity for specialization (75

percent) and variety of courses (73 percent) offered. Research emphasis (47 percent) was found to be least useful to their current work according to the graduates' perceptions. This perhaps is due to the fact that at public universities research is more emphasised at post-graduate levels than at the undergraduate level.

When asked to indicate how useful their degree course was in preparing them for their present work 83 percent of B.Ed, 75 percent of B.Com. and 71 percent of B.Sc. graduates indicated that it was to a very great extent. They all appeared to concur in their responses that their degree course was very useful in preparing them for other spheres of life (78 percent for responses 1 and 2). There was minimal variation in response to this question.

Overall assessment of the extent of the use of knowledge and skills acquired during graduates' studies is indicated in Table 11. Of the surveyed graduates, 72 percent said that they used knowledge and skills acquired to a high or very high extent, only 3 percent of the graduates responded to the contrary. These findings are an indication that the courses offered by the University of Nairobi are quite relevant to the work assignments of graduates.

Table 10: Graduates assessment of usefulness of degree course by faculty (percent; responses 1 and 2)

	Field of Study			Total
	Education	Science	Commerce	
Course content of major subject	84	74	91	85
Course content of minor subject	85	57	62	70
Variety of courses offered	85	50	73	73
Opportunity for Specialization	82	57	77	75
Research emphasis	66	41	31	47
Practical emphasis of teaching and learning	91	44	42	65
Work experience (internships etc.)	76	40	39	57
Count (n)	(180)	(85)	(160)	(425)

Question 29a: How useful did the following elements of the study programme prove to your current work? Scale from 1 = very useful to 5 = not at all useful.

Table 11: Overall assessment of extent of use of knowledge and skills acquired during studies (percent; arithmetic mean)

	Field of Study			Total
	Education	Science	Commerce	
Use of knowledge and skills acquired during your course of studies				
1 To a great extent	32	24	31	30
2	45	23	48	42
3	13	32	17	18
4	8	13	3	7
5 Not at all	2	9	1	3
Arithmetic mean	2,0	2,6	1,9	2,1
Count (n)	(178)	(88)	(160)	(426)

Question 31: When you look at your current work tasks altogether: to what extent do you use the knowledge and skills acquired during your course of studies? Scale from 1 = to a very high extent to 5 = not at all.

Conclusions and recommendations

An analysis of the results regarding study provisions and conditions at the University indicates an average rating of most of the aspects studied. Indeed seven of the twenty-five aspects were rated as good or very good by 50 percent or more of the graduates. Due to the rapid expansion of the enrollment of students at the University of Nairobi and other public universities without a corresponding increase in facilities in the 1990s, most of the facilities have been strained and run down. Buildings and facilities that the Government had started to put up in the early 1990s in public universities to cater for the expansion of student enrollment were abandoned half-way due to lack of resources. There is an urgent need for the University of Nairobi to rehabilitate its rundown facilities and complete the buildings that were left unfinished in the 1990s. This will reduce the over-crowding and the strain put on the available facilities. Rehabilitation and completion of the incomplete facilities should be given priority to enhance the university's core mission of teaching, research and community service.

Education graduates from the faculty of external studies were employed by the time they first enrolled in their degree programme. However commerce and science graduates took some time to get employed. The period taken by most of these graduates ranged from 5 months to 3 years.

The length of the period between graduation and employment depended on the year of graduation. Those who graduated in later years appeared to have more difficulties in getting employed. This state of affairs was attributed to the

stagnation of the economy and the increase in poverty levels in the country. The public sector, which used to employ the majority of public university graduates now rarely employs them. Indeed, since 1994 there has been a major retrenchment programme for civil servants and university workers. University graduates will in future have to seek other employment avenues particularly in the private sector, the informal sector and in self-employment. Universities will need to re-orient their academic programmes to this reality.

The results with regard to the skills acquired by the graduates and their use in graduates' current work showed that graduates rated them quite highly. Of the 11 skills listed for assessment, only 3 were lowly rated by the graduates. Generally at the time of graduation most of the graduates had acquired critical skills required in their current work. However, one very significant skill where graduates felt inadequate was computer applications. This skill is now very crucial for the performance of most jobs and in everyday life. Training in computer studies at the University of Nairobi has not been introduced on a wide-scale. This has been due to the limitations of computer facilities available. To introduce computer studies for all students will require considerable resources. However, this can be done gradually with proper planning. A major project for the computerisation of teaching and research facilities has been mounted.

Graduates' assessments of the usefulness of knowledge and skills acquired at the University were quite high. The major subject of study, area of specialisation and variety of course offered were found to be very useful in graduates' current work. Research emphasis was rated as the least useful element of graduates' current work. Overall about 71 percent of the graduates indicated that knowledge and skills acquired at the university were very useful in their current work. This was an indication that the courses offered at the University were quite relevant to the work assignment of the graduates.

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