JHEA/RESA Vol. 21, No. 1, 2023, pp. 29-56

(ISSN 0851–7762) https://doi.org/10.57054/jhea.v21i1.6228

Operationalisation of the Commission for University Education's Guidelines for Teaching and Learning in Kenya's Public Universities

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Abstract

This article examines the capacities and structures within Kenya's public universities to operationalise guidelines from the Commission for University Education (CUE) regarding quality academic practices. The concerns of the study arose from evident increasing number of students in public universities in the absence of matching resources. This article presents an analysis of the CUE guidelines issued to universities concerning teaching and learning resources, as well as an evaluation of the extent to which these guidelines have been implemented in four selected public universities. The argument made is that effective management cultures and capacities determine successful implementation of CUE's standards and guidelines, which translates to quality teaching and learning practices. Conversely, a weak management culture restricts the effective application of the guidelines. The article points out several obstacles that the institution and regulator must address to implement the guidelines effectively. The obstacles include resistance to change, inadequate facilities, underfunding, understaffing and lack of capacity building.

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Résumé

Cet article examine les capacités de gestion et les structures des universités publiques du Kenya à appliquer les directives de la Commission de l'enseignement universitaire (CUE) élaborées pour des pratiques académiques de qualité. Les préoccupations soulevées par cette étude découlent de l'augmentation manifeste du nombre d'étudiants dans les universités publiques en l'absence de ressources correspondantes. Cet article présente une analyse des directives de la CUE adressées aux universités concernant les ressources d'enseignement et d'apprentissage, ainsi qu'une évaluation du degré de mise en œuvre de ces directives dans quatre universités publiques sélectionnées. L'argument avancé est que des cultures et des capacités de gestion efficaces déterminent la mise en œuvre réussie des normes et directives de la CUE, ce qui se traduit par des pratiques d'enseignement et d'apprentissage de qualité. A l'inverse, lorsque la culture managériale est inadéquate, la mise en œuvre des orientations est remise en cause. L'étude montre également plusieurs obstacles que l'institution et l'organisme de réglementation devront surmonter pour une mise en œuvre efficace des directives. Il s'agit notamment de la résistance au changement, des équipements inadaptés, du sous-financement, du manque de personnel et de mesures de renforcement des capacités.

The shift from small elite to mass education due to increasing demand for university education (Githaiga and Tuitong 2009) has led to issues of quality in university education in Africa (Constance and Pletsch-Betancourt 2009). Increased enrolments in universities have resulted from the need for upward mobility (Marginson 2016) and, in the context of Kenya, because of improved completion rates at primary and secondary education levels (MacCowan 2018; Mohamedbhai 2008; Muema and Lavery 2018). Kadenyi (2009) and the Ministry of Education (2018) further attribute increased enrolments to the financing of students in both private and public universities by the Higher Education Loans Board.

Besides, as discussed by Mukhwana, Kande and Too (2017) liberalisation of higher education in Kenya, has resulted to the establishment and growth in the number of both public and private universities. (CUE 2015; Mukhwana, Kande and Too 2017). Liberalisation has been a change in thinking towards embracement of private initiatives in the provision of university education (Boit and Kipkoech 2012; Gudo, Olel and Oanda 2011; Ministry of Education 2016; Mukhwana, Kande and Too 2017; Nyerere, Gravenir and Mse 2012; Sall and Oanda 2014).

Table 1 below illustrates how liberalisation of university education, resulted to the increase in enrollment rates in universities. Although there is a slight decrease in the years 2019 and 2020 probably due to Covid-19, the growth picks momentum in 2021 and 2022.

Table 1: Enrollment in universities 2015–23

Academic Years	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Total Rates	409,221	564,507	522,059	519,462	509,468	546,699	562,066	562,925

Source: CUE statistical data 2015-2023; KNBS 2017, 2018, Mukhawana et al. 2017

Increased enrollments to universities has taken place in the context of decreased public funding to public institutions, forcing the universities to enroll self-sponsored degree and diploma students (Muema and Lavery 2018). The enrollment of privately sponsored students has been driven primarily by the need for institutions to generate additional revenue to offset government funding shortfalls, rather than being aligned with existing institutional resource capacities. Increased enrollments have also led to unplanned curriculum reviews and modes of delivery to meet the needs of diverse students' populations (Muema and Lavery 2018). These developments and challenges have put pressures on university management (Mange et al. 2005), to respond to the changing university landscape for Kenya to compete globally (Muema and Lavery 2018).

In terms of external quality assurance, the CUE has provided guidelines that universities need to implement to ensure quality academic programmes. Implementation of the guidelines, however, also require resources that the universities are struggling to generate.

Requirements of the Standards and Guidelines from CUE

The CUE Universities Standards and Guidelines contain eight schedules outlining the standards for quality teaching and learning in Kenya's public universities. These include institutional standards; standards of physical resources; standards for an academic programme; standards for open, distance and e-learning; standards for university libraries; standards for technical universities; standards for specialized degree awarding institutions and commissions form (CUE 2014). The Commission mandates universities to be responsible for the internal quality assurance of their academic programmes (Mukhwana et al. 2016). The Commission stipulates the standards to be followed in the development and administration of the

programmes in universities. This ranges from development to the actual implementation of the programme in the lecture room. Focus is also placed on supplying academic resources to support the programmes (CUE 2014). The Commission personnel and university management monitor these standards. University management is responsible for creating an enabling environment to meet CUE standards and guidelines on quality teaching and learning (CUE 2014). This study examined the degree to which university management adhered to CUE standards and regulations, as well as the measures taken to foster an environment conducive to quality teaching and learning within universities.

Statement and Contextualisation of Research Question

With rising enrollments to public universities, the question around the capacity of the institutions to implement the standards stipulated by the CUE needs to be examined. While standards and guidelines aim to ensure university quality, increasing student numbers and shrinking public resources often leave institutions unable to fully implement them. Existing literature does not explain this role and does not show the management structures in place to enforce the standards and guidelines. This article examines the impact of a growing student population on teaching and learning processes and highlights the role of university management in implementing CUE standards that affect educational outcomes within higher education institutions.

University senates serve as key organs established to ensure the quality of academic programmes. The role of Senate is to lead, manage and facilitate changes in respective dockets to align with CUE requirements. The role includes establishing and ensuring favorable environments for teaching and learning. University senates are further tasked with the role of administration and leadership within the university in relation to academic programmes, student affairs, finance and administration. In the university management structure, the Vice Chancellor(VC) is the chief executive officer (CEO), with the ultimate administrative responsibility for the institution. The CEO, however, is accountable to the university council. Universities in Kenya also have Deputy Vice-Chancellors (DVCs) who oversee the portfolios of finance and administration, academic and student affairs, and research and extension. Under the DVCs are principles of colleges and deans of faculties who provide leadership within their respective colleges and faculties in support of the DVCs. Heads of departments, positioned at the base of the administrative hierarchy,

coordinate teaching and learning activities at the operational level. It is under such arrangement that this article considers these offices as key decision makers responsible for quality teaching and learning in their respective universities.

Management of university programmes occurs at two levels. The first consists of top academic leadership through which the senate sets the tone of quality required in the delivery of academic programmes. This is usually set by the institutional academic mission, and actualised through institutional academic policies, including those provided by CUE. The second level occurs within the school or department, where the actual processes of teaching and learning are administered. In the public universities where this study was undertaken, the system of electing academic leaders had been discarded in favour of appointed departmental deans, directors and heads of departments who are representatives of the appointing authority. The role of these appointed heads and directors is therefore to manage academic activities on behalf of the appointing authority and to ensure that the basic processes are in place regardless of the quality and channels. This study presupposes that university management plays a significant administrative role in mainstreaming best practices that ensure quality teaching and learning even in large classes, which can pose significant challenges (Hornsby et al. 2013).

Consequently, university leaders are tasked with the responsibility of promoting high-quality teaching and learning processes (Alabi and Alabi 2014; Muriisa 2014). This article deals with university management's role in the implementation of some of the key CUE standards that relate to teaching and learning environment including enforcement of CUE quality assurance policies under the themes of periodic review of the curricula, staffing capacities, teaching and learning activities, learning facilities and resources and student welfare. These indicated were selected since they directly influence the quality of teaching and learning.

The teaching and learning processes may go beyond what core management – vice-chancellors and their deputies – can do, since it will have to depend on how the lower tier of academic leaders – deans, heads of departments and coordinators of programmes or timetable and examination officers – organise activities at that level. Nevertheless, core management serves as both the primary policy developer and, to a significant degree, the executor of those policies; this dual responsibility is essential for maintaining quality by ensuring the necessary resources

are provided. Academic leaders should ideally be imbued with the ability to know what knowledge is more critical to teach, excite students and peers about learning, know what teaching practices are most effective and invest their considerable energies in the promotion of student learning (Bond 1997).

> Administrative positions at the senior level are vested with the responsibility, whether derived by statute, charter or articles of incorporation, of ensuring that the institution and its members fulfil their educational, social and ethical mandates. Administrative leaders may or may not be leaders in either teaching or research but are respected for their judgment, institutional knowledge and predictive powers. While holding a leadership position does not guarantee that a person is a leader.

The administrative leader speaks to the academy, including its students, staff and external constituencies, about what the academy is, what it is doing or could be doing better, and provides a contextual framework with which to guide the institution's progress towards its goals (Bond 1997). Accepted teaching and learning practices are measured against the extent to which university leaders implement the CUE standards and guidelines. In the context of this article, the 'goodness' or 'badness' of these practices is under the weight scale of CUE standards and stipulation that provide guidelines to the same.

Study Design and Research Methodology

This was a comparative study that sought to compare the compliance to CUE standards in four universities – University of Nairobi (UoN), Moi University (MU), Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (MMUST) and Kisii University (KU). The study utilised document analysis, data sets, in-depth oral interviews, observations and questerviews to explain how these universities apply teaching and learning practices as directed by the CUE.

Sampling proceeded in two stages: first, the selection of public universities, and second, the identification of respondents. The sampling universe comprised the thirty-one chartered public universities. These chartered public universities were categorised into two, based on their period of establishment – six that were founded before 2001 and the remaining two that were founded after 2001 (Mulinge et al. 2017). The assumption underlying this categorisation was that more established universities enjoy better physical and human resources that enhance their domestication of CUE standards, which is important in understanding

variations of the latter. First, the study purposively sampled the UoN and MU as the pioneer universities. Secondly, MMUST and KU were randomly selected from a pool of 24 remaining institutions on 10 per cent rule for homogenous populations (Kothari 2004: 61; Kumar 2011: 169).

The schools of arts and social sciences (SASS) from the four sampled universities were purposively sampled based on existing studies and an overview of enrollment trends. The schools of SASS enrolled more students than any other school in the selected universities. The Ministry of Education (2018: 26) also confirms that most programmes in Kenyan universities focus on arts and social sciences, while there are relatively few courses in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). The SASS also service all the other schools that admit students to study arts and social science related courses.

The study purposively sampled and interviewed two VCs, three DVCs, three deans of SASS, three directors of quality assurance directorates and heads of academic departments in 10 per cent of departments of SASS. To ensure representation from every department within SASS, the study randomly selected 10 percent of all lecturers and conducted interviews proportionally based on departmental size.

Data Presentation and Discussions

The focus of the study was to examine the level of teaching and learning resources, the level of enrollments, curricular and the teaching-learning process gauged against guidelines provided by CUE. Data on staff to student ratios, availability of staff, their workload and availability of teaching and learning spaces are also examined.

Enrollment Levels Versus Teaching and Learning facilities in Public Universities

Statistics on enrolment in the four universities show that student admission has been on the increase as Table 2 indicates. However, it is notable that data for 2020 and 2021 (Covid-19 years), was incomplete, and therefore not captured. The table shows significant reduction in numbers in three of the four universities after 2019, probably attributable to the pandemic. It may also be attributed to the move by government to strengthen technical institutions while encouraging students to take up craft and technnical subjects.

Table 2: Enrolment in selected public universities in Kenya in the last four years

University	2017/18	2018/19	2022/23	2023/24
UoN	67,827	71,610	34,111	41,174
MU	37,907	35,963	20,931	17,067
MMUST	16,827	20,294	27,245	24,277
KU	19,903	62,524	31,743	36,013

Source: CUE statistical data 2017-2024

Public universities in Kenya admit students two pathways through the Kenya Universities and Colleges Central Placement Service (KUCCPS) and through direct admission by individual universities. Under the KUCCPS admission system, each university and school declares the number of vacancies available in what is called declaration of capacities as observed by an associate professor in an in-depth interview:

> Normally, the universities declare smaller numbers so as to leave some space for students for what is popularly referred to as Direct Entry. Sometimes students who don't meet the minimum entry requirements to university are taken through bridging courses and others processed through certificate to diploma before they enter bachelors.

Despite this observation, there have been new development since 2023 where new higher education funding model (the Student-Centered Funding Model) replaced the Differentiated Unit Cost model. The new model places students on a need-based system classifying them from vulnerable to less needy. It further combines government scholarships, loans and household contribution to support students to join universities. Depending on the student's band, specific amounts are sent to the institutions and the rest to the student for upkeep.

Subsequently, to date, the management of the four universities sampled for the study focus more on creating capacity for direct entry enrollments to generate funds to cover shortfalls from public funding from government. 92 per cent of lectures sampled across the four universities and interviewed for the study indicated that increased class sizes had made realisation of quality teaching difficult. They blamed their university administration of their focus on income generation through direct entry recruitment, which contravened the stipulated CUE standards and guidelines on matching the number of students to the available university physical and human resources.

The Commission stipulates that universities and campuses should have adequate minimum facilities to support the student population (CUE 2014: 13–14). There are clear stipulations on the physical facilities

required for different programmes and numbers of students. However, resources have not concomitantly increased alongside the growing number of students (Mukhwana, Kande and Too 2017). To increase space for more direct entry students, the universities had resorted to hiring private physical facilities across major urban centers and establishing these spaces as satellite campuses. However, because these facilities were not originally designed as educational environments, it was impossible to adapt them into suitable spaces for teaching and learning.

Staff to student ratio is one of the most important statistics in any learning institution. This helps in determining the loading levels of the faculty, adequacy of learning space and availability of materials for teaching and learning. Data presented in Table 3 shows the teacher–student ratio in public universities for the years 2023 and 2024.

Table 3: Teaching Staff Ratios in Universities by Category

University Category	**2023**	**2024**
	Teacher/ student ratio	**Teacher/ student ratio**
Public Chartered Universities	40.77	44.36
Private Chartered Universities	42.83	33.96
Public University Constituent Colleges	14.29	61.32
Private Constituent Colleges	25.92	8.29
Letter of Interim Authority Institutions	8.32	11.49

Source: CUE (2024:20)

In all the universities, in 2023, the teacher-student ratio stood at an aggregate of 1:64, meaning one teacher served 64 students. In public chartered universities, the teacher student ratio increased from 40.77 in 2023 to 44.36 in 2024. Varied ratios in other categories are as observed in table 3 above. In all public and private chartered universities, the ratios are all above the UNESCO accepted level of 1:30. Further, these ratios are more than triple of the ratio stipulated by CUE's university standards and guidelines (2014), which requires a full-time staff–student ratio of 1:10 in applied sciences, 1:15 in arts and humanities, 1:10 in pure and natural sciences and 1:18 in social sciences.

CUE (2014) guidelines provide that the maximum number of students an academic member of staff supervise in any given academic year should be five master's students and three doctoral students. The workload relative to the available staff, as well as the student-to-qualified academic staff ratio, significantly exceeded initial estimates. While certain clusters reflect

accurate figures, comprehensive contextual analysis is necessary to grasp the true nature of the university environment. This study found that, as staff numbers declined in some departments, careful adjustments were made regarding the number of courses offered each semester, as well as intra-school and inter-school co-teaching provisions.

High enrolment numbers in schools of education resulted in overcrowding across several departments offering arts courses. Furthermore, staff shortages compelled these departments to reduce their course offerings to only essential core and elective classes, thereby restricting students to options manageable by the current faculty. The requirement that staff to student ratio be used to determine the loading levels of the faculty, as CUE mandates, was not applicable across the sampled universities. Lecturers indicated that in some courses, they taught large classes that ranged between 500 to 700 students. Similarly, it also followed that since lectures serviced other departments, the indicative staff to student ratios were not accurate as these were calculated using an academic staff 's teaching load in the core department only.

The shortage of qualified staff is evident in national statistics that show how academic staff are spread among various public and private institutions, as illustrated in Figure 1.

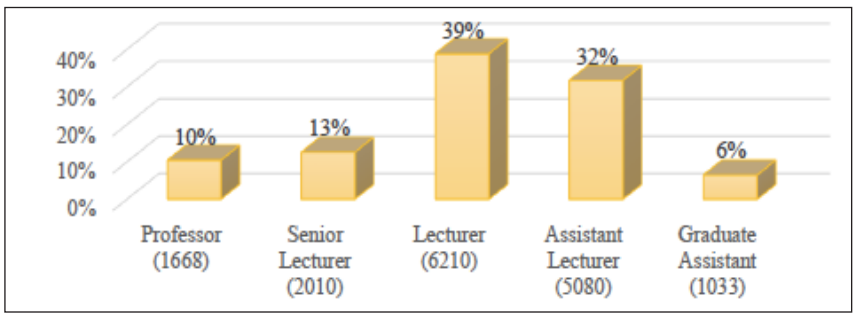


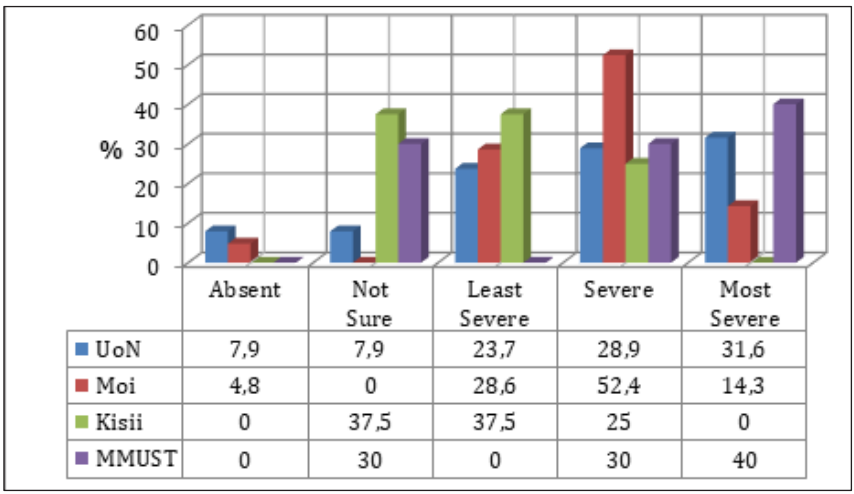
Figure 1: Staff distribution across universities

Source: Mukhwana et al. (2016: 67)

From the study, on a perception index, 70 per cent of respondents in MMUST indicated that there was severe inadequacy of staffing. This was followed by MU at 66.7 per cent, UoN at 60.5 per cent and KU at 25 per cent (see Figure 2).

The inadequacy of qualified teaching staff had adverse implications including shortage of lecturers and supervisors for postgraduate students as well as capacity to develop new programmes at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Studies, globally suggest globally have established that the

number of students per teacher has a remarkable effect on the achievement of students (Black 2015; Blatchford 2003; Blatchford and Lai 2012; Glass and Smith 1978; Graue and Rauscher 2009; Kilonzo, Sandfort and Liu 2016; Mohamedbhai 2008; Ramsden 1998). For the universities participating in this research, the shortage of lecturers translated to unsustainably heavy teaching loads for lecturers. Though the study did not measure quality of teaching given the challenges of staffing, studies have shown that such constraints compromise the quality of education offered (Black 2015; Glass and Smith 1978; Kilonzo, Sandfort and Liu 2016). The strain also compromises the research capacity for the lecturers, as well as capacity building. None of the universities in the sample had sponsorship for doctoral studies, which could be a basis of building a generation that would fill in the gaps of shortage of staff. This implies that the understaffing is likely to remain an issue for some time. Members of staff blamed university management for lack of sufficient support on adequate staffing, although this challenge goes beyond the management given the insufficient capitation from the government.



	Absent	Not Sure	Least Severe	Severe	Most Severe
UoN	7,9	7,9	23,7	28,9	31,6
Moi	4,8	0	28,6	52,4	14,3
Kisii	0	37,5	37,5	25	0
MMUST	0	30	0	30	40

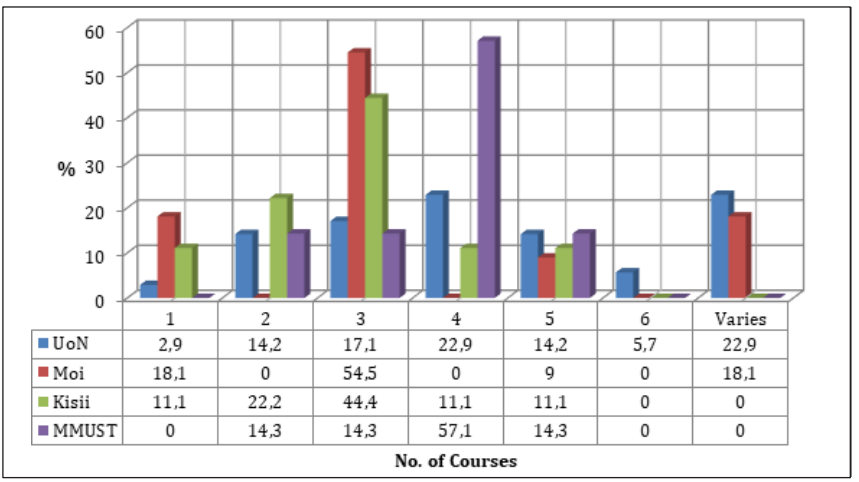
Figure 2: Inadequate staffing of lecturers

Source: Authors' field data, 2018

Teaching Loads

CUE standards stipulate that, ideally, a lecturer should teach three courses per semester. The study found that many lecturers at all four universities taught over three courses per semester (UoN) 42.6 per cent, MU 9 per cent, KU 22.2 per cent and MMUST a staggering 71.4 per cent, as seen in Figure 3.

It can therefore be extrapolated that, given the above findings, it was not feasible to give individual students due attention, thus lecturers were likely to resort to teaching strategies that favour rote learning rather than learning for understanding (Prosser and Trigwell 1999). Beyond teaching the large class sizes, compromised the capacity of lecturers to prepare, administer, and grade examinations. It is not surprising therefore, that most (89.5 per cent) of all the lecturers interviewed expressed dissatisfaction with the processes. One lecturer commented: what the dean needs is complete marks. They do not care about how teaching happens. The pressure is about students' examination marks.' University managers indicated that there were procedures of employing academic staff, which required them to justify the need and obtain approval from the Ministry of Education. In so doing, they had to justify how they were going to raise money to pay the new staff, which is a tall order given that they were not profit-making organisations.



	1	2	3	4	5	6	Varies
UoN	2,9	14,2	17,1	22,9	14,2	5,7	22,9
Moi	18,1	0	54,5	0	9	0	18,1
Kisii	11,1	22,2	44,4	11,1	11,1	0	0
MMUST	0	14,3	14,3	57,1	14,3	0	0

Figure 3: No. of courses taught per semester
Source: authors' field data, 2018

Limited resources present a significant challenge for university administration, resulting in the stalling in career advancement for lecturers due to substantial teaching workloads, leaving little time for research. Research on staff-to-student ratios (Blatchford 2003; Blatchford and Lai 2012; Graue and Rauscher 2009) indicates that maintaining caution with large class sizes is essential. The implementation of divided classes and the inclusion of teaching assistants are recommended to support quality instruction, as failure to do so may result in diminished educational outcomes.

Teaching and Learning Spaces

One of the adverse outcomes of rapid enrollment expansion is overcrowded classrooms, largely stemming from the absence of proportional investment in physical facilities and the shortage of qualified staff to manage the growing student population. Although CUE (2014) recommends that an ideal arts and social science class should be eighty students, it adds that such an ideal is best judged by the space available to accommodate the students. This ranges from 1 to 299 students as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: CUE recommendations on classroom space

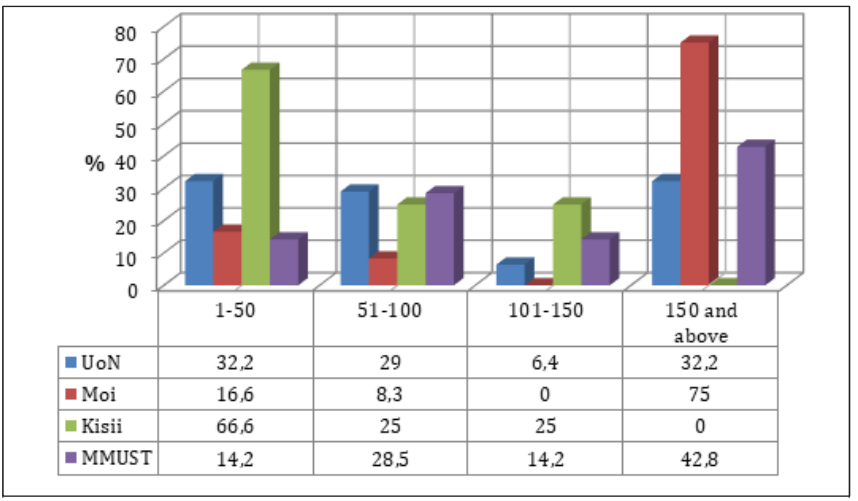
No. of students	Space in square meter with desk and chair	Space in square meter with chairs only
1–29	1.9	1.9
30–39	1.9	1.4
40–59	1.7	1.3
60–99	1.7	1.2
100–149	1.7	1.0
150–299	1.5	0.9

Source: CUE guidelines 2014

Field data showed that the average class in the SASS departments was 150 students in spaces that were grossly overcrowded. In some cases, the numbers were as high as seven hundred students for common courses since many SASS departments also serviced other schools, especially the school of education. Where there were no adequate teaching facilities like lecture halls, the scramble for a space inside the rooms was evident. Some students ended up in doorways and the verandas around the rooms. Further, most of the available spaces did not have some basic facilities, such as a public address system, to ameliorate the situation. Students carried seats from one lecture room to another, implying that these were not in sufficient supply either. Comparatively, KU came on top in relation to manageable classes, as 66.6 per cent of its classes do not have more than fifty students. At the extreme end, at MU 75 per cent of its classes had more than 150 students (Figure 4).

Up to 77.8 per cent of KU had adequate lecture spaces, followed by MMUST at 60 per cent, UoN at 53.6 per cent and lastly MU at 40.9 per cent. It is interesting that even the well-established institutions lacked enough spaces for learning. Conclusively, the substantial number of students per class and the comparative lack of sufficient learning spaces and other

facilities were not ideal for effective teaching and learning environments, which made it virtually impossible to meet CUE's standards. A growing body of research suggests that there is a relationship between learning facilities and student/teacher outcome (Hathaway 1995; Ayers 1999). It is against this backdrop that the Commission requires that all academic programmes in Kenya's universities 'shall be supported by appropriate and adequate facilities and equipment' (CUE 2014, PROG/STD/18).



	1-50	51-100	101-150	150 and above
UoN	32,2	29	6,4	32,2
Moi	16,6	8,3	0	75
Kisii	66,6	25	25	0
MMUST	14,2	28,5	14,2	42,8

Figure 4: No. of students per mandatory course class
Source: authors' field data, 2018

Management Interventions Align Teaching and Learning Practices with CUE Standards

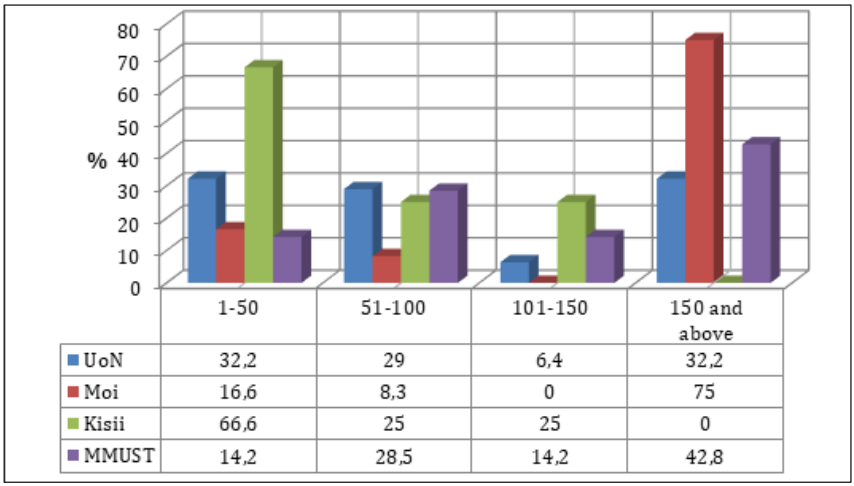
This section explores efforts university managers to implement standards and guidelines for teaching and learning processes as provided by CUE. It examines the ways in which university management tried to navigate the challenges of large student numbers, limited physical facilities, lack of adequate staff, capacity building and research challenges, among others.

Deployment of Information and Communication Technology and Virtual Learning Centers

All four universities provided Internet access to both staff and students. Wireless hotspots were available throughout the campuses, facilitating student assignments, guided learning, and social engagement. The management appreciated the role that information and communication

technology (ICT) play in virtual learning, especially for online students. One effective way to address growing student populations is by using internet services to support innovative teaching methods. Concerns were, however, raised on the need to train lecturers on the use of ICT for online teaching and learning. Although some training in online facilitation had already taken place, additional sessions remain necessary. Importantly, the significance of online teaching and learning has increased markedly since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020.

The facilities for online learning such as computer laboratories were, however, inadequate in all the four universities. Some of the computer labs that were available for students taking any IT related or online courses were the same computers used by students studying computer science. As Sampong (2009) opines, the majority of public universities do not have the capacity to install modern facilities for learning, such as video conferencing, soundproofing, auditoriums, performance theatres to cater for the growing student numbers, especially around creativity (see Figure 5).



	1-50	51-100	101-150	150 and above
UoN	32,2	29	6,4	32,2
Moi	16,6	8,3	0	75
Kisii	66,6	25	25	0
MMUST	14,2	28,5	14,2	42,8

Figure 5: Multimedia facilities (e.g. auditoriums, theatres)

Source: authors' field data, 2018

Across much of Africa, universities are increasingly deploying ICT systems to manage the large student populations. This is because education is recognized as a critical factor in the promotion of economic and social growth of both the individual and the national. The growth of the global economy and information-based society has pressured education systems around the world to use technology in knowledge and skills acquisition (Morawcynski and Ngwenyama 2007). In Kenya, learning institutions

are under increasing pressure to integrate ICT in teaching and learning (MOEST 2012). The Government of Kenya has formulated and implemented a two- part framework on ICT integration in education: a review of the national ICT policy and the provision of ICT infrastructure to institutions public institutions.

One way in which university management is harnessing ICT is through establishment of virtual learning centers (VLC) and satellite campuses. It is understandable that newer universities indicated enlarged capacities for ICT in use (66.7 per cent and 53.3 per cent for KU and MMUST, compared to 46.3 per cent and 36.4 per cent for UoN and MU respectively). At MMUST, which led in the number of VLCs, a dean explained that their introduction, and that of satellite campuses, was the only way they could compete in the market and serve as many students as possible. Table 5 shows both increased VLCs and newly created larger learning spaces.

Table 5: Perspectives on the existence and use of VLCs and learning spaces in the institutions

	Existence of VLCs					New spaces for teaching and learning				
	Never Used	Not Sure	Least Used	Used	Most Used	Never Used	Not Sure	Least Used	Used	Most Used
UoN	17.5	15	30	27.5	10	17.1	2.4	26.8	46.3	7.3
MU	38.4	8.7	30.4	13	13	9.1	36.4	13.6	36.4	4.5
KU	11.1	33.3	22.2	11.1	22.2	0	11.1	11.1	66.7	11.1
MMUST	28.6	14.3	0	57.1	0	13.3	13.3	13.3	53.3	6.7

Source: authors' field data, 2018

The situation was stark but positively different regarding physical teaching and learning facilities. The four universities fared differently on this account. At KU, a massive 90 per cent of respondents indicated that the university provides adequate teaching and learning facilities and equipment. UoN followed this at 53.5 per cent, MMUST at 53.3 per cent and MU at 45.8 per cent. There were indications of expansion of facilities indicated by on-going construction witnessed during fieldwork, especially at KU and MMUST. The established universities paid more attention to construction of modern facilities.

Staffing and Capacity Building

Quality staff is key to the success of an institution's success (Altbach and Knight 2007). In recognition of this fact, the Commission's PROG/ STD/17 standard requires universities to have academic programmes

supported by adequate full-time staff who hold requisite academic qualifications. The standard further requires a programme to be guided by an appropriately qualified academic leader. Further, a university must provide evidence of the qualifications and appointments of its staff. Universities are also expected to provide technical support to the teaching staff to ensure quality teaching and learning. The Commission requires universities to consistently enhance the capabilities of their academic staff to ensure leadership in knowledge acquisition and dissemination. The study found that the administration of the four universities did not fully comply with this guideline. According to one Deputy Vice Chancellor responsible for academic and student affairs:

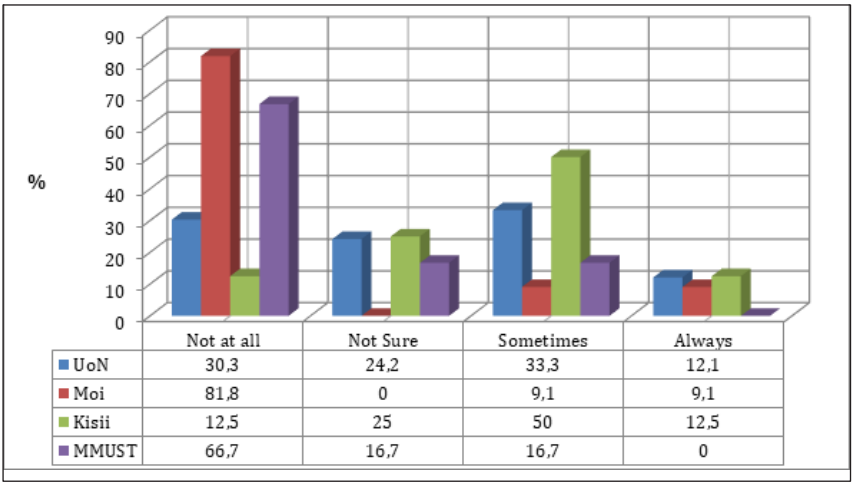
> Insufficient funds makes it difficult for the administrations of universities to run programmes that are needed to offer quality education to the ever-increasing student population. The universities find it virtually impossible to hire more staff, purchase more equipment and improve existing and/or put up new structures.

This speaks about the challenges that university administrators faced. As observed by Hénard and Roseveare (2012), any educational institution that hopes to provide quality education must align its policies and practices to quality teaching. Quality teaching is linked to quality teaching staff. In Kenya, the Commission requires a doctorate as the basic qualification for a lecturer. Those who are below this rank are employed as tutorial fellows or graduate assistants and on contractual basis. Due to this demand, university administrators often heavily encourage their teaching staff to obtain doctoral degrees and sometimes concerns about quality might be neglected as a result.

Management had tried to bridge the qualification gap by hiring temporary lecturers, but this only exacerbated an already challenging situation because most of these part-time lecturers were not qualified and had little or no experience in teaching at the university level. Furthermore, those doing the part-time teaching were already in the service of other universities spread all over the regions. The problem was complicated by the perennial lack of funds, which made it difficult to pay the part-time lecturers on time. There were reports that some of the part-time lecturers withheld students' scripts or in the end surrendered the scripts without marking. All these are in direct contravention of CUE (2014) standards that stipulates that 'an academic programme shall be supported by adequate full-time staff holding requisite academic qualifications.

CUE recognises the importance of in-service capacity building for academic staff and clearly stipulates this fact in standards for quality education. The study sought to understand whether capacity building is institutional or members of

academic staff prerogative. Lecturers said that the use of seminars, workshops and in-serving training (for graduate assistants and tutorial fellows) were some of the internal methods used by the management for capacity building, with MMUST and UoN leading with 73.3 per cent and 60.3 per cent respectively, followed by KU at 60 per cent and lastly MU at 41.6 per cent. Interviews with respective managers of these universities indicated that these were the preferred capacity building methods because of cost-effectiveness in low resource settings. Although records were not available to qualify this claim, interviews with lecturers indicated that there was some form of capacity building activity driven by the management every academic year, although these figures were low: 12.5 per cent in KU, followed by UoN at 12.1 per cent and MU at 9.1 per cent. Majority of those interviewed indicated that capacity building did not happen at all, as seen in Figure 6.



	Not at all	Not Sure	Sometimes	Always
UoN	30,3	24,2	33,3	12,1
Moi	81,8	0	9,1	9,1
Kisii	12,5	25	50	12,5
MMUST	66,7	16,7	16,7	0

Figure 6: Capacity building after every academic year
Source: authors' field data, 2018

Staff Welfare

The management of all four universities had similar incentives including house allowance, responsibility allowance, mileage allowance and medical coverage. Additionally, these institutions encouraged their academic staff to apply for research grants under the aegis of their universities. The universities managed these grants at a commission labelled administrative cost, but the principal researcher managed the rest of the grant to run the research project although they remained accountable to the institution. The research grant counts as a contributory factor to criteria for promotion as demanded by the Commission, especially in the positions Senior Lecturer, Associate

Professor and Professor. Among other considerations, the Commission's promotion criteria for university lecturers include research, publishing, supervision of postgraduate students, attending seminars/ conferences and community participation. In this situation, the adage of 'publish or perish' is a professional death knell to most lecturers. Most are unable to cope, as they do not have sufficient time for research and publication. Others opt for predatory journals, where they pay money to have papers published faster, and without a lot of editorial demands.

Development and Review of Academic Programmes

CUE standards require that an academic programme shall facilitate a balanced learning process, ensuring that students are able to acquire cognitive, affective, and psychomotor skills as consistent with the educational goals and aspirations of Kenyans. The design of an academic programme should consider contextualization and relevance, contribution to the overall national human resource development and requirements, and practical orientation (CUE 2014). The study established that there were challenges that limited the institutions from meeting this aspiration. The two most critical limitations were around inadequate academic staff capacity and financial resources. All four universities examined experienced these challenges. However, UoN and MU—ranked better than MMUST and KU on these metrics. For MU however, later financial challenges since 2020 have compromised service delivery in the institution. Consequently, some programmes developed under these conditions may not meet CUE standards. The Commission maintains the responsibility to approve or reject submitted programmes, adhering to well-defined standards and guidelines in its evaluation process.

All the four universities lacked the resources to adequately address challenges that compromise development of quality academic programmes. For example, none of the management of the four universities had in place a working academic staff development programme, despite the demands for academic growth of lecturers and the shortage of trained lecturers. Although this may not squarely lie on the management – as the state needs to better support these institutions – there should be an effort to train graduate assistants through full or partial scholarships. The position of tutorial fellows is a slight exception; however, although these are training positions, tutorial fellows take on full course loads and thus have little to no time to carry out meaningful research. This also derails the process of attaining their doctoral degrees.

At one of the two established universities, a dedicated unit within the School of Education (Arts) was responsible for curriculum development and review. However, the scope of the unit was not university wide. Such units were not present in the other institutions in the sample. Instead, curriculum reviews were undertaken at the level of respective teaching departments and faculties. The irony is that public universities have had phenomenal growth of bachelor's and postgraduate programmes in the recent past as compared to their private counterparts; they have had many programmes approved by CUE. Overall, data from CUE, as seen in Figure 7, shows a disparity between public and private universities. With the challenges noted in staff growth and development, this can only mean one thing. Poor quality in public universities' output.

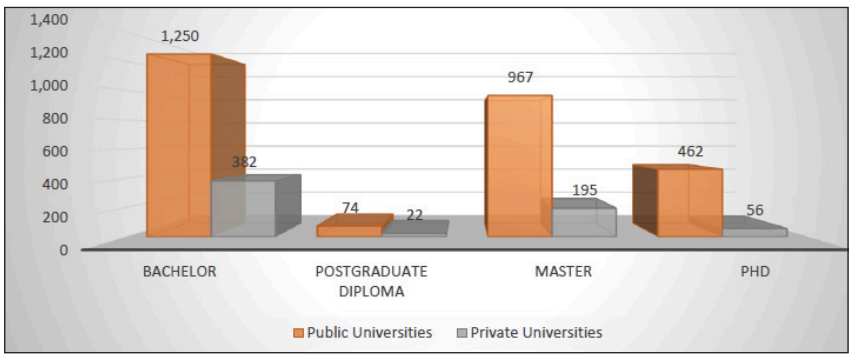


Figure 7: Programmes in public and private universities per category
Source: Mukhwana et al. (2016: 16)

Regarding review of academic pprogrammes, CUE standards stipulate that universities shall conduct self-assessment of their programmes at regular intervals by instituting structures for continual internal assessment of their academic programmes. The Commission requires that all universities review their academic programmes at least once in every cycle of the programme. Further, the Commission's standards require that each institution establish a programme development team that guides the institution on programme and curriculum development to ascertain that the institution's proposed curricula has met the standards of curriculum development. The university senate reviews and approves this before sending it to the Commission for accreditation evaluation. In this aspect of curriculum review, MMUST led on the perception index that the institution had complied with 86.7 per cent, followed by MU at 79.2 per cent, KU at 70 per cent and last UoN at 69.8 per cent. MMUST recorded a high percentage probably because

there were only three departments in SASS, which made it easy for the members to know when a review was conducted. This was in contrast with UoN whose faculty of arts and social sciences is vast. In-depth interviews with officers in charge of quality assurance in the university confirmed that regulations required every teaching department to conduct a thorough review of their courses to conform to industry needs. All universities confirmed that the curriculum review is done every four years to ensure that the programmes being offered were relevant to the learners. This is as required by CUE guidelines.

Internal Quality Assurance Processes

CUE (2014) stipulates that all universities in Kenya must be chartered and their programmes accredited. Within this stipulation, CUE acts as the external quality assurance mechanism. Consequently, universities are expected to institutionalise their own internal quality assurance mechanisms. For this reason, Table 6 captures an analysis of the management enforcement of internal quality assurance policies and mechanisms in the institutions.

Table 6: Views on enforcement of quality assurance policies

	Never enforced	Not sure	Enforced	Highly enforced
UoN	9.5%	21.4%	61.9%	7.1%
MU	.0%	26.1%	69.6%	4.3%
KU	.0%	.0%	100.0%	.0%
MMUST	6.7%	13.3%	80.0%	.0%

Source: authors' field data, 2018

The majority (77.9 per cent) of the respondents agreed that management was enforcing quality assurance policies. It emerged that universities had tools to track teaching and to monitor and evaluate teaching in various campuses. The first tool used was the students' attendance register. Though the attendance was recorded on sheets in every institution, these were entered into logbooks or files (which were signed by class representatives and lecturers after every lesson) that were surrendered to the head of department's office for onward transmission to the office in charge of quality assurance. However, this was an almost impossible task for classes of more than one hundred students since the exercise took a lot of time. In such cases, some lecturers did not conduct the exercise at all, while others delegated the work to the class representatives, which created the potential for malpractice. Such classes require, as Black (2015) argues, commitment and loyalty, as well as time management skills (Drew 2010) and support services (Fullan and Scott 2009).

Further, in three of the four universities, the quality assurance departments also provided course evaluation forms for students to independently fill and establish whether teaching met the required standards as well as the expectation of the students. A follow up to establish measures taken against those who were faulted by students for not either teaching effectively of satisfying the needs of the students showed no existence of such measures. A probe on the perception on the use of these evaluative forms by the lecturers gave the general impression that in an environment where services were offered to such a large number of students, there was a mix of very serious and less serious students, thus an evaluation form completed by a student who may not be interested in attending classes was arguably a futile exercise. The offices in charge of quality assurance, however, deemed this important because, as two officers indicated, it tamed rogue lecturers who did not take their work seriously.

The universities also used continuous assessment tests (CAT) to gauge the students' progress in the various courses. CATs are coordinated at the academic department level. The requirement was two CATs for every course before students sit for their final examinations. However, this was again a demanding exercise for lecturers teaching the larger groups. The lecturers interviewed on this said that giving two CATs means marking three sets of examinations for every course; for a class of 300 students or more, they felt it was too daunting a task and therefore ended up giving only one CAT. The implication then would be that if a student failed in that one test or missed the same, then this resulted in failure of the course altogether. It is in such scenarios that creativity in teaching and grading was called for. However, very few used teaching/learning groups, flipped classrooms, peer evaluation, project work or other possible means to creatively reach out to students.

In addition, regulations require that departments moderate their examination papers before and after sending them to external examiners for comments. The same process applied for the examination results. Once internal examiners mark the scripts, the departmental examination coordinator calls for a meeting for all internal examiners to moderate the examination and afterwards the results are forwarded to the external examiner. This was a common practice across the institutions. The managers were keen to ensure the set dates for the various examination exercises were adhered to. The registrars in charge of academics released the semester calendar to the heads of departments and deans of schools early in advance for members to prepare for the exercise. This schedule prepares the staff for the semester and allows them time to prepare for the required examination processes.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Overall, there seemed to be an effort to comply with the standards and guidelines for teaching and learning as provided by the Commission. In instances where the management could not enforce or enhance compliance, there were underlying factors that may be systemic and require the attention of the various stakeholders including the Ministry and the government. However, in an era of increased enrolments and insufficient funding from the state, university managers were left with little choice but to creatively innovate and partner with the private sector to address the challenges facing the implementation of the guidelines.

One can argue that the quality of university education is largely dependent on the qualifications of students at the point of entry. However, what students gain by the time they complete their studies at the university is dependent on the quality of learning and teaching practices. This study has presented mixed indications on the success of the efforts of university managers on the implementation of CUE standards and guidelines in teaching and learning practices. These inversely determine the available facilities and resources to guarantee quality teaching and learning processes or otherwise. As the study has shown, practices and regulations that are in place to transform quality of education in these institutions, translating to satisfactory performance, have been compromised by the number of learners admitted to these institutions without matching resources. The inability of staff to effectively accommodate the considerable number of students in the classes they teach is a serious challenge of public university education in Kenya. Student to staff ratio has a serious implication on the quality of education. Hiring enough qualified staff could ensure that the quality of education being offered meets the standards required. Classes could also either be sub-divided or co-taught as a way of ensuring efficiency, but this also requires enough staff. The need to train enough postgraduate students, and especially doctoral students, is urgent in the sector.

Funding is critical for quality university education. In Kenya, university education is state-centric. It is also highly dependent on policy makers. The state channels a lot of funding to basic education – primary and secondary – to the detriment of university education. Public funding is not sufficient for the actualisation of the many standards and guidelines required of the institutions. It would therefore be inappropriate for the government and other stakeholders to demand quality education when the tertiary education sector is devoid of sufficient funding. Furthermore, the funds generated from self-sponsored learners are not sufficient to support public universities given the number of enrolments. Beyond state funding and student fees,

more innovate ways of generating funds need to be explored: universities should expand their search for grants and partnerships from private and public entities, as UoN achieved with its Chinese funded Confucius Centre. Finally, the Kenyan government and universities could adopt the Ghanaian model in which the government uses 2.5 per cent of the value added tax to fund university education. Such an initiative could significantly improve the challenges currently experienced in the sector.

Kenyan public universities need to develop a strong brand to ensure they remain competitive and relevant in attracting students, staff and international partners. This requires not just adhering to the CUE stipulated guidelines but going above and beyond. Given the current environment where demand surpasses supply, forcing increased admissions, the need to re-examine existing standards and a modification that suits the current market is necessary. This is not to say that the regulations should be loosened to the detriment of quality. Some of the internal self-regulating mechanisms like call registers can be improved through technology where clocking machines are available for students to swipe or use finger prints and the data transmitted to the quality assurance office. This will not just reduce paperwork but also decrease the time lost in conducting role-calls in large classes. In this regard, CUE should make regular follow-ups on whether universities are implementing and refining the standards in line with the specific needs of each institution. Besides developing technologically advanced information monitoring systems, the Commission should engage the institutions in training workshops targeting university managers who are enforcing these standards.

The need to improve existing curriculum development departments and create new ones where they do not exist remains key. This will fast track the curriculum reviews and the development of appropriate programmes to match market demands. Tied to this is the need to train members of academic staff on programme and curriculum development. Though CUE (2014) provides a criterion for developing programmes, much more is required in relation to staff skills. The process also requires some form of commitment and sacrifice on the part of the government and the institutions. A strategy that might be useful in this respect is developing beneficial educational partnerships and co-operation with other global partners that have succeeded in linking their higher education curricula and programmes to the demands of market. A place to start is at the Inter-University Council of East Africa, which seeks to create a Common Higher Education Area and is in partnership with the East Africa Business Community.

The management of public universities encounters several significant challenges in the process of ensuring that standards are implemented and achieved. These include resistance to change, inadequate facilities, understaffing, insufficient funds and under-capacity. Most of these identified and quality-related challenges have been highlighted in previous research. For example, Keener et al. (2002), Shin and Harman (2009) and Teixeira and Koryakina (2013) have identified challenges related to funding; Drew (2010), Fullan and Scott (2009) and Keener et al. (2002) have examined staff management and human resources challenges; and Black (2015), Fullan and Scott (2009) and Altbach and Knight (2007) have shown how red tape and bureaucracy affects these institutions. These challenges are not very different from those highlighted in the context of this study. It is up to each institution's management to work towards overcoming these issues for better teaching and learning practices.

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