

Effects of Curriculum to Relevance of Purchasing and Supplies Option of Moi University to the Work Place in Kenya

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Abstract

The relevance of higher education to the work place has been an issue of concern to scholars, government and international institutions such as the World Bank, OECD, among others. This is more so in Kenya where most of the original objectives of the universities for instance, are becoming increasingly obsolete in the face of rapidly changing conditions and needs of the society. Critics of university education in Kenya believe that key abilities such as critical thinking, problem solving, among others, are frequently not developed at university. Hence, the result is that graduates are not equipped with relevant skills and competencies required for work. The extent to which these assertions are correct with regard to purchasing and supplies education in Kenya remains an issue that needs to be investigated. The study assessed the relevance of the curriculum of purchasing and supplies option of Moi University to the work place. Reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha. Simple regression was used to analyze and test the hypotheses. The findings of this study indicated that curriculum (X) was found to be a significant determinant of the relevance of the program to the work place (Y) with $t = 2.800$. These findings hold implications for Moi University, to intensify pursuit of necessary and favourable changes in curriculums to ensure that they are relevant to the job market. The study concludes that the curriculum needs to be strengthened in order to build students' skills and abilities which are crucial in the work place. It is recommended in part curriculum should be composite of both academic and vocational training and that the Procurement Act should be an independent course studied thoroughly in the third and fourth year of study. Lastly the university should endeavor to review this program regularly as stipulated in its charter.

Key Words: Curriculum, Relevance, Work Place, Kenya

1.0: Background to the Study

The relevance of education and in particular higher education to the world of work has been of interest to some writers such as Stafford (1982:243 - 249); William (1985); Berg (1992); Alback (1991); Cooney (1987) among others. They all emphasized the need for education and in particular, higher education to be relevant to the world of work. Mankin (1977:44 - 53) for instance, sees the future role of education to be the development of work-related skills and abilities. Similarly, Hughes (1979) opines that young people need to be prepared for a world in which the nature of work itself is rapidly changing and the education system must find ways of opening itself up to these changes. According to Chelule, (2009), whatever may be its nature, content, or participants, a training programme must clearly lay down its objectives. This is important not only for the training agency, but also for agencies or institutions nominating the trainees/participants, as well as trainers. Therefore the training programme must represent a strong personal goal of the trainee for maximum learning to take place.

According to Giunipero and Handfield (2004), purchasing/supply management education and training are vital to the success of the organization and to the survival and growth of the profession. In the last decade, there have been dramatic impacts upon and changes within the field of purchasing and supply management, all of which have ultimately influenced education and training trends. Some examples of the major changes that have shaped the supply management landscape since 1993 (the year of the first Purchasing Education and Training CAPS Research study) include a change to more strategic supplier relationships and alliances, as firms look to optimize expertise and resources through the chain, the growth and expanded use of the Internet to facilitate e-sourcing, e-procurement, and other business activities, reductions in purchasing staff, a focus on strategic goals related to cost and value, the evolution of supply chain management as an integrated competitive business strategy, and the increased contribution of purchasing to this strategy and a shift from basic, tactical purchasing to more strategic supply management

Giunipero and Handfield, (2004) further note that there is also increasing anecdotal evidence that many of this decade's Chief Purchasing Officers (CPOs) are being assigned from outside the purchasing and supply field.

These appointments bring with them two strong implications: first, senior management desires different objectives and outcomes from the purchasing/supply management groups than they perceive would be obtained by promoting from within, and secondly these new CPOs appear to be appointed with short-term employment contracts/agreements and have defined missions for change that must be accomplished in a defined period. All these conditions combine to create the dynamic environment in which purchasing and supply professionals are operating today. In order to meet the challenges and expectations dictated by this environment, it is appropriate to revisit the realm of purchasing education and training in the new millennium and discover relevant trends. By doing so professionals can then create or influence action plans to achieve education and training goals that will foster success.

Accordingly, the overall objective of the purchasing and supplies programme of Moi University is to provide students with knowledge, skills and appropriate attitudes in the discipline in order to enable them to effectively participate in the development of purchasing and supplies as an academic discipline and to improve standards of management in the relevant industry.

1.1: Statement of the problem

The relevance or responsiveness of university education in Kenya to industry requirements should be a matter of concern to the education sector as well as education policy makers like the government, the business community and the entire public. Rapidly changing conditions and needs of society can pose serious challenges to university education with regard to effective and efficient management of resources capable of producing graduates who are problem-solvers and who can wrestle with the daily demands of public and private enterprises. For not living up to the challenges of the moment, Kenyan universities have come under severe public criticism. Prominent among the avalanches of criticisms is that higher education emphasizes disciplinary concepts and information to the exclusion of skills development.

Ajayi (1973), for instance, observed that despite the efforts of the African universities to improve agriculture, technological development, moral and social values, political science and approaches to better administration, there is no meeting of minds between the academic and the common man. Hence, the university agriculturalist is not a better farmer whom the Village farmer can emulate. The study of philosophy, political science or public administration in the universities might leave some impressions on government officials but it seems to produce no wiser administrators than the traditional rulers, nor the ideas and values that are of direct relevance to the work of government among the traditional sectors of our society.

Critics of university education in Kenya believe that key abilities such as critical thinking, problem solving, time management among others are frequently not developed at university. The result is that graduates are not properly equipped with relevant skills and competencies for application in the work place. The extent to which these assertions are true with regard to purchasing and supplies education in Kenya remains an issue that needs to be investigated. This study therefore, intends to establish the effects of curriculum to relevance of purchasing and supplies programme of Moi University to the work place in Kenya.

1.2: Research Objective

To establish the curriculum of Moi University Purchasing and Supplies option relevance to Kenya's work place.

1.3: Hypothesis

H₀: Purchasing and Supplies curriculum of Moi University is not relevant to the work place

1.4: Theoretical framework of the study

This study was based on the systems theory by von Bertalanffy (1940). The systems theory approach is based on the notion that organizations can be visualized as systems. A system is a set of interrelated parts that operate as a whole in pursuit of common goals. According to the systems viewpoint, an organizational system has for components: Inputs, Transformation processes, Outputs and Feedback.

2.0: Literature Review

2.1: Concept of curriculum relevance

Curriculum relevance is the application of what is taught in schools to the needs and interests of the society and students. According to Rassekh & Vaideanu (1987, p. 199), the relevance of education content may be regarded as describing its relationship to and conformity with a twofold set of requirements represented on the one hand by the whole range of sources of content and societal values on the other by the needs, interests and intellectual and physical abilities of the learners.

From an epistemological point of view, curriculum relevance is interpreted as immersion in the changing phenomena constituting the life environment of the student and rejection of the abstract and the remote. It is the learning in which students learn to apply knowledge, concept and / or skills to solve real –world problems. This is learning that is interdisciplinary and contextual which is created, for example, through authentic problems or

tasks, simulations, service learning, connecting concepts in current issues and teaching others (Rassekh & Vaideanu (1987).

Philosophical bases for curriculum are foundations which deal with values, ideals, notions and belief of life and of education that curriculum planners use to establish priority in the process of selecting experiences for the curriculum (Ornstein & Hunkins, 1998; Shiundu & Omulando, 1992). There are two broad philosophical schools of thought that relate to the issue of subject matter or content in the curriculum and these are the traditional school of thought; and the progressivism school of thought. These two schools of philosophical thought have proposed three important theories of subject matter that curricularists reflect on whenever curricula are to be developed for any form of education. These theories are subject matter should be taught for its own sake, subject matter should be taught for use and subject matter should be taught as medium for teaching life processes and skills.

Otunga (2010) noted that a relevant curriculum in any country consists of important elements. Firstly, a curriculum which promotes holistic development and individual excellence thus, the curriculum development should have capacity to develop important domains or aspect in an individual learner. The cognitive (intellectual capabilities), psychomotor (manipulative or physical skills), and effective cultural aspect to the highest level possible for optimal productivity, Scholars refer to this as personal relevance curriculum which plays an integral role in the learner's life and has a major influence on the self-concept, psyche, outlook to life and world view. The emphasis is on personal growth, integrity, autonomy, and unique meaning. Personal growth is viewed as the process of developing into a self-actualizing, autonomous, authentic, healthy, and happy human being. Education within this context means holistic growth toward personal and humane goals; an integration of the cognitive, creative, aesthetic, moral and vocational dimensions of being human., Curriculum which falls short of any of the three domains lacks balance in relevance (Petrina, 1992). Relevant curriculum should also empower students to reach their maximum potential and attain personal excellence. Secondly, inclusive curriculum, that is, curriculum should be non-discriminatory which includes as much as possible the various sections of learners in the community and country. Thirdly, curriculum which promotes human rights, democracy, justice and rule of law, Fourthly, curriculum which focuses on achievement of national development goals, Fifthly, curriculum which takes into account the available support resources such as curriculum development, use, innovation (improvement), review and evaluation are resource – intensive endeavours that require heavy investment in terms of finances, expertise, land, infrastructure and many others. Sixthly, curriculum which recognizes the ecological realities, socio-cultural integration, national identity, historical landmarks, regional and international realities as essential for growth and development, Seventhly, curriculum which takes on board contemporary and emerging issues and problems in life. Finally, a curriculum which takes on board all or most of these elements in its formation or development would be considered as an adequately relevant curriculum.

It is clear from the foregoing that curricula at all levels of education have undergone various transformations since inception to the current status. Curriculum is never static because life itself is dynamic and so curriculum development is a dynamic, never ending process. It is in this dynamism that curriculum addresses the constant and emerging issues and problems in life that education is expected to address (Otunga, 2010).

2.2: Curriculum development in Kenya

Curriculum development process is cyclic and continuous as each step depends on the step preceding and after it and there should be constant communication among all the steps. Such dynamism, university curricula are expected to be current and address contemporary needs for meaningful development into the 21st Century.

In developing curriculum, the KIE has identified ten (10) main stages through which a given curriculum package should pass. These stages are Policy decision, Needs assessment, Conceptualization and policy formulation, Formulation of curriculum design, Development of syllabuses by subject specialists, Development and selection of teaching and learning materials, validation and approval, Teacher preparation for the task of curriculum implementation, Piloting or try-out of the new curriculum, Curriculum implementation and curriculum monitoring and evaluation (Otunga, 2010).

Otunga, (2010) noted that the process of curriculum development at university is composed of five (5) main stages: Curriculum conceptualization, Selection of objectives and learning experiences, Organization of learning experiences, Curriculum implementation and Monitoring and evaluation. Universities develop their curricula influenced by their specific institutional orientations (their visions and missions), but basically they follow similar procedures. In the case of undergraduate curriculum usually the faculty members in the departments engage in research, programme evaluation and / or need assessment in their subject specialization which may indicate a need for revision of an existing curriculum or development of new curriculum. This is collaborative enterprise which involves lecturers in the discipline (discipline specialists), university administrators, students, stakeholders (including government departments) other interest groups and coordinated by a curriculum specialist. These people come together in a curriculum design workshop to review or design new curriculum.

Curriculum development at university does not proceed as smoothly as described above. At every stage of approval, there are intensive discussions that any issue raised must be exhaustively addressed. This means that the curriculum is taken back to the presenting organ for improvement before re-presentation and approval. It should be noted also that these steps are not followed faithfully by the public universities; each make unique adjustments suitable to the specific conditions existing in the institution. In practice, the reviewed or developed curricula are used for a minimum full-term or life span of each programme before summative evaluation is carried out. Depending on the indicators in the summative evaluation data, the curriculum may be continued as is, innovative or reviewed to address the latest developments in the discipline or abandon all together (Otunga, 2011).

Relevant curriculum in any country is highlighted in the country's development plans. Kenya has in the past had two long-term policies and several 5-Year Development Plans. The first was sessional Paper No. 10 of 1965: "African Socialism and its Application to Kenya," and the second was sessional Paper 1 of 1986: "Economic Management for Renewed Growth." The third and current long-term policy is the Kenya Vision 2030 which "aims at making Kenya a newly industrializing, middle income country providing high quality life for all its citizens by the year 2030" (ROK 2007, p.1). This is the country's development blue print covering the period 2008-2030. The overarching vision of this long term policy is that Kenya would be "a globally competitive and prosperous nation with a high quality of life by 2030" (ROK 2007 p.2). The strategy to achieving this lies in three identified pillars: Economic, social and political which are expected to function at optimal levels (Otunga, 2010).

Public universities' curriculums are determined by each university's vision and mission. For example Moi University was established to offer science and technology programmes (Mackay, 1981), Kenyatta University was meant to focus on the humanities and Egerton University was to concentrate on agricultural – oriented programmes. However due to the public demand for more university opportunities, the universities have expanded their curricula including duplication of some popular programmes (Bogonko, 1992).

3.0 Research Methodology

The study was undertaken in the Republic of Kenya (ROK). The study employed an explanatory research design. The main target units for analysis of the study was all the alumni of the BBM Purchasing and Supplies degree option of Moi University in Kenya. Since 2006 until 2009, a total of 143 students have graduated. The target population therefore comprised 143 alumni. Samples were drawn from the target population of the 143 alumni. The sample size for this study was therefore 143 alumni. All the alumni were included in the sample size. Sampling techniques included census and snowball sampling techniques. Census sampling was used as all the alumni formed the sampling frame while snowball sampling was used to reach the respondents for the study. Despite the fact that snowball sampling is a non-probability method, it was the best available technique the researcher had to identify the respondents using chain referrals as they were spread all over the country. Questionnaires that consisted both close-ended and open-ended questions were used to collect primary data. The close ended questions adopted a five-point likert scale while the open ended questions generated additional vital information from the respondents. The questionnaires were administered by the researcher and some were administered via e-mail or posted to the respondents. A pilot test was conducted to test the validity of the data collection instruments. This study used Cronbach's coefficient alpha to test the consistency of respondents' answers to all the items in a measure. It is an inter-item consistency reliability that is suitable for this study because it is used for multipoint scaled items. Data obtained was mainly analysed quantitatively and qualitatively. Excel package and Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) were used in data analysis. Both descriptive and inferential tests were performed.

4.0: Data Analysis.

4.1: Reliability Analysis

Cronbach's alpha was used to test the reliability of the data collected. The highest value stood at .936 while the lowest stood at .716. These results indicate that the indicators used to measure the variables were reliable in explaining each of the variables under study. The independent variable for the study was curriculum. Curriculum had seven indicators with a Cronbach Alpha of .936 while the dependent variable had three indicators with a Cronbach alpha of .716.

4.2: Simple Regression

The regression model used in this study is given as;

$$Y = a + \beta_1 X + \mu \dots\dots\dots(1)$$

Where Y – Relevance of the purchasing and supplies program at Moi University, X – The curriculum, α – Constant term, β – Slope parameter and μ - Error term (Stochastic error term)

Relevance of the program was made up of three sub-variables namely, responsibility, recognition and initiative. These three sub dependent variables were added and averaged to derive the dependent variable for this research. For curriculum, the sub independent variables averaged included:- purchasing, marketing, operations, communication, financial, management and advertising as shown in table 1.

4.2.1: The regression equation

$$Y = \alpha + \beta_1 x_i + \mu_i \dots\dots\dots(2)$$

That is, $Y = 0.746 + 0.01x + \mu_i \dots\dots\dots(3)$

From the above model, we can note that there exist a positive relationship between relevance of the program and curriculum; $\hat{\beta}_1 = 0.014$, is the sample parameter estimate of the population parameter β_1 . It shows that when curriculum improves by one unit percentage, relevance of the program improves by 1.4%. It follows then that a unit improvement in curriculum in terms of Purchasing, Marketing, Operations, Communication, Financial, Management, and Advertising will improve relevance of the program by 1.4% and vice versa.

4.2.2: T-test (test of research hypothesis)

In order to test the stated hypothesis, statistical significance of the parameter estimate was established and thus enabling the researcher to establish the significance of the variable in the model and therefore its relative importance in determining the dependent variable.

The 95% confidence interval for the estimation of β_1 ranged between -0.086 and 0.114 for the lower and upper bound respectively with $\hat{\beta}_1 = 0.014$. The true population parameter would lie in this range on 95 occasions out of one hundred occasions this parameter is estimated. The standard error of the estimate stood at 0.0039. This is a small value which implies a more reliable prediction of $\hat{\beta}_1$.

The sample estimate $\hat{\beta}_1 = 0.014$ was found to be statistically significant at 1% level with 98 degrees of freedom with $t_1 = 2.800$. Clearly, curriculum is a significant determinant of relevance of the program offered by Moi University. With this result, the hypothesis was rejected that Purchasing and Supplies curriculum of Moi University is not significantly relevant to the work place as shown in table 1

4.2.3: Tests of Model Fit

In this research, R^2 was found to be 0.438. From this figure of $R^2 = 0.438$, we can deduce that the simple regression of Y on X explains 43.8% of the variations in the dependent variable. R^2 of 43.8% implies the model is significant in studying the situation at the work place as experienced by former graduates and that it has captured the important variable. The rest of the variations (100 – 43.8) % can be attributed to factors included in the error term as depicted in table 2.

5.0: Discussion

The contents of the curriculum are good but seem to lack some aspects necessary for student development. Petrina (1992) posits that a good curriculum promotes holistic development and individual excellence thus, the curriculum development should have capacity to develop important domains or aspect in an individual learner such as the cognitive (intellectual capabilities), psychomotor (manipulative or physical skills) and effective cultural aspect to the highest level possible for optimal productivity. Scholars refer to this as personal relevance curriculum which plays an integral role in the learner's life and has a major influence on the self-concept, psyche, outlook to life and world view. This emphasis is on personal growth, integrity, autonomy, and unique meaning. Curriculum which falls short of any of the three domains lacks balance in relevance. Relevant curriculum should also empower students to reach their maximum potential and attain personal excellence. A good curriculum should be inclusive, that is, curriculum should be non-discriminatory which includes as much as possible the various sections of learners in the community and country. It should cater for the normal brackets of learners as well as the special and talented learners, the well endowed and less endowed, minority groups, learners in urban and rural environments, the various gender needs, the cultural diversity, diverse aptitudes and interests, age difference and life-long education needs of the learners. The PS curriculum seems to be an inclusive one.

Curriculum should promote human rights, democracy, justice and rule of law. Relevant curriculum should adequately empower learners with knowledge about human rights, democracy, justice and the rule of law as universally conceived. This aspect of the curriculum would mould the learner to have capacity to identify and competently deal with social ills such as corruption, nepotism and impunity which easily becomes entrenched in human activities (Otunga, 2011). With the inclusion of courses such as state and society and development concepts in the PS curriculum, students get to learn about governance. However, it does not contain aspects on human rights and the rule of law. Curriculum seems biased towards supporting the ruling government irrespective.

Good curriculum focus on achievement of national development goals. Accordingly, the PS curriculum does not seem to address or have contents pertaining to the Vision 2030 which outlines Kenya's development goals. Additionally, a relevant curriculum should consider the availability of support resources for functionality and recognize the ecological realities, socio-cultural integration, national identity, historical landmarks, regional and international realities as essential for growth and development. Thus, a relevant curriculum should prepare the individual for productive life in both local environment as well as international forums. These aspects seem to be missing in the PS curriculum.

Purchasing and Supplies curriculum does not consider pertinent issues such as environmental, health, gender and diversity which would otherwise enhance the capacity of students to operate productively in their current and future lives. Notably, a good curriculum should take on board contemporary and emerging issues and problems in life such as globalization, technological development, global citizenship, social justice, values and perceptions, diversity, interdependence, sustainable development, terrorism, conflict resolution, environmental degradation, HIV/AIDS, Ethnic and land clashes, unemployment, drug and substance abuse, cultic worship, and human trafficking. A relevantly crafted curriculum has capacity to address these issues and problems since individuals grow up, are nurtured and made in learning institutions given the age at entry and the time spend in schools and colleges (<http://cmslive.curriculum.edu.au/leader/default.asp?id=22205&issue1>)

Young *et al.*, (1996) posited that purchasing training consists of courses pertaining to Operational Competencies, Client-Oriented Expertise, Management Skills, Parallel Function Knowledge, Benchmarking and Environmental Scanning, Purchasing Awareness and Catalytic Processes. Of all these, PS option seem not to have aspects of budgeting, value engineering, manufacturing practices, courses that provide purchasing professionals with the ability to interpret the direction of supply markets by reading current events data, courses that address the issues of senior purchasers effectively bringing about change in the purchasing function and across corporate boundaries in order to optimize supplier and customer relationships across the entire supply chain.

Kolchin and Giunipero (1993) rated 10 subjects as most important namely: Total cost analysis, Negotiation strategies and techniques, Supplier/partnership management, Ethical conduct, Supplier evaluation, Quality techniques, Purchasing strategy and planning, Price/cost analysis, Electronic data interchange (EDI) and Interpersonal communication. Commendably, these subjects are all covered in the Purchasing and Supplies option of Moi University, thus the curriculum contents could be relevant to the work place.

In another study Kolchin and Giunipero (1993) identified the most popular course offerings by firms in their sample to be negotiations/ethics, basics for purchasers, and total quality management (TQM) which are apparently all included in the PS curriculum. However, from the findings of this study TQM was deemed as not important as compared to the rest.

Pooley and Dunn (1994) pointed out that material management knowledge was ranked high in importance and there was a growing importance of material management skills in the last two decades amongst purchasing practitioners. Application of MRP systems, innovative production systems like Just-In-Time, integrated supply chain management, and other management techniques probably propelled the growth of the material management attribute. Each of these management techniques requires some level of coordination between purchasing and materials management.

6.0: Conclusions and Recommendations

From this study, a conclusion can be drawn based on the independent variable, curriculum, and its effect on the dependent variable, relevance of PS program to the work place.

The content of the curriculum greatly affect the relevance of the PS program to the work place. This conclusion has been drawn by the fact that majority of the respondents felt that most of the courses in the curriculum were relevant to the work place. In addition, from the factor analysis results, out of twenty seven courses in the questionnaire, its only four (total quality management, business environment, research methods and business finance) that respondents felt were not relevant to the work place. The regression results also indicated that curriculum was significant in explaining the relevance to the work place of the PS option, which is in agreement with the literature reviewed, but certain important aspects seem to be missing in the curriculum that need to be addressed.

The curriculum should be composite of both academic and vocational. The curriculum should not simply be academic, but should be integrated with the technical and vocational skills acquisition as well as the right values and attitudes for functional operation.

The Procurement Act should be an independent course and should be studied thoroughly in the third and fourth year of study. Students become more relevant in the workplace when they can understand the act and able to guide an organization in adhering and being compliant to the government statutes. Knowledge on international logistics and law should be included and emphasized to give students a more global perspective.

The curriculum to some extent needs fine tuning to provide more real experiences. When developing the curriculum, the university should endeavor to borrow and compare the curriculum contents offered at JKUAT and other international universities. The curriculum should reflect the dynamic changing environment in terms of social, political and economic changes.

The University should work towards review of the programme to keep pace with the practice in procurement cycles. Currently the university is supposed to review all its programmes on a four year basis. This is rarely the case and review of programmes including the purchasing and supplies is rather irregular and erratic.

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Table 1: Table of Coefficients

Model		Unstand arized Coefficients		Stand arized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval for B		Correlations			Collinearity Statistics		
		B	Std. Error				Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF	
1.	(Constant)	.746	.225		3.317	.001	.300	1.193						
	X	.014	.0039	.024	2.800	.000	-.086	.114	.140	.028	.021	.765	1.308	

a Dependent Variable: Relevance
 Source: Data analysis, 2011.

Table 2: Model summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	.662(a)	.438	.401	.32783	.438	25.100	3	98	.000	1.386

a. Predictors: (Constant, Curriculum)
 b. Dependent Variable: Relevance
 Source: Data analysis, 2011

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