Effects of Teaching Methods 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 primary aim of this study therefore was to determine the factors affecting the relevance of teaching methods employed in the purchasing and supplies option of Moi University to the work place. Reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha. Multiple regression was used to analyze and test the hypotheses. The findings of this study indicated that teaching methods with $t_l = 1.534$ and a Beta value of 0.024 found to be significant determinant on the relevance of the program to the work place. The study concludes that teaching methods need to be strengthened in order to build students' skills and abilities which are crucial in the work place. The study made several recommendations such as increased interaction between students and the industry players, practitioners and professionals as well as exposing students to more practical aspects in order to use case studies in their learning.

Key Words: Teaching Methods, 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); Cookey (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

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 can 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.

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 fill the gap in literature.

1.2 Research Objective

To determine the relevance to the work place of the teaching methods and facilities employed in the PS option.

1.3 Hypothesis

H_{01}: Teaching methods and facilities employed in the PS option are not significantly 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 Teaching and Assessment Methods

The teaching methods used to impart knowledge to students include lectures, project learning and assignments.

Firstly, the lecture method is the most ancient and traditional training method, dating back to the times of Greek philosophers, who were custodians of wisdom and knowledge. It involves the trainer's presentation of facts, ideas, or concepts continuously to the trainees without the trainees' involvement for more than 20 minutes (Chelule, 2009). According to Lee as cited by Chelule (2009), lecture is a pedagogical method whereby the lecturer formally delivers a carefully planned expository address on some particular topic or problem. It is a straight talk with or without the use of visual or other training resources, and without group participation. A presentation lasting for less than 20 minutes is called a lecturette. Lecturing is an art whose skill is acquired through practice over time. Its main code consists mainly of the need to face the class, to be audible, to avoid repetition, to know the subject well, and the need to change the stimulus such as varying the voice. It is basically an information giving method in which trainees assume a passive and non-participatory role

Lecturers usually come with their own style to the learning environment: traditional or interactive where the lecturer invites participation, or poses problems or topics for discussion. The tradition involves the lecturer talking and the student taking notes while interactive lectures allow tutors to interact with students, explore topics related to the themes of the individual modules relying on the expertise of the tutor in conjunction with the individual study by the student. Active participation by the students in lectures is facilitated through the formulation of answers to questions raised by the tutor as well as through the development of opinions and viewpoints concerning the topic being explored. Active participation of students is therefore required of these sessions (Chelule, 2009). Consequently, lectures in the BBM course are both interactive and traditional. Lecturers give notes and invite participation by the students whereby questions are posed to the students and they are required to give their opinions concerning the particular topic.

Secondly, project learning involves a situation whereby a class is assigned a wide topic with a problem to study through investigation. It is an inquiry or heuristic approach to learning. The project method of training is an interdisciplinary approach to learning because skills and different pieces of information (knowledge) are acquired through it. It usually takes more than one instructional or training/ teaching session to complete one project. Chelule, (2009) further cited other scholars in the definition of project training as follows: Stevenson boldly and aptly defines an educational/training project as 'a problematic act carried to completion in its natural setting.' Kilpatrick noted that a project is a wholehearted purposeful activity proceeding in social environment. Ballard defines it as 'a project is a bit of real life that has been imported into a

classroom' whereas a modified definition has been given by Tomas and Long, who say that, a project is a voluntary undertaking which involves constructive effort or thought and evaluates into subjective results. Parker says that a project is a unit activity in which students/trainees/learners are made responsible for planning, purposing and executing. In Moi University, research project is done during the final academic year of a student's course with the commencement of writing the proposal, doing the actual research, analyzing the findings, compiling the report and finally submitting it to the lecturer concerned. The marks scored in the research project add up to the final mark of the student.

Thirdly, assignments/ group work/ exercise is a method which involves asking the students to undertake a particular task leading to a required result by following certain guidelines. It is usually a practice, a test, or an exercise to examine knowledge, attitudes or skills put either prior to or after a topic has been discussed (Chelule, 2009). Assignments can be presented in various formats such as written assignments, individual or group assignments. Written individual or group assignments are given to the students to reflect on, and to summarize systematically the learning, both of knowledge and skills, during a particular period and in a particular topic. This is given along with suggested readings. Thereafter, these assignments are examined and marked by the lecturer who, along with his comments and ratings, returns the same to the students either for record or for additional work (Chelule, 2009). Written assignments in the degree course are given to students by means of term papers and reports. The students are given deadlines in which they are required to submit their work. To assist in doing the written assignment, the students refer to books available in the library, the internet and sometimes refer to the lecture notes. The mark attained in these assignments is also included in the final scores of the subject.

On the other hand, library Assignment is one of the effective ways of ensuring that students become knowledgeable about a particular topic, and are able to analyze a topic and express their views, in the use of library – oriented assignments. In it, the students are given a certain topic to research on by perusing literature materials in the library. These library – based assignments are heuristic, i.e., the discovery approach to learning, and are called by various names such as library research, term papers, inter alia (Chelule, 2009). Library assignments in the course are given to students by lecturers in class whereby the lecturer asks the students to read and familiarize themselves with a new topic in the subject that is yet to be introduced. A lecturer might also ask the students to read about a certain topic that he or she will not teach in class and is simple enough to be understood by students through reading. In such a case, the students are expected to make their own notes after reading. .

Additionally, individual assignments involve individual practice of specific skills, reading and writing assignments, and tutoring are some of the conventional methods of individual training. By using individual assignment approach, the lecturer adopts activities at the trainee's rate of learning, which is a gauge of the trainee's competence and motivation. In the PS course, individual assignments are given to students in the form of term papers, library readings, presentations in the class, activity tasks or field assignments where a student visits a business establishment to gather information and through take-away tasks. All these guide the lecturers in assessing the progress of students. Lastly, group work assignment is a method in which the assignment given to the students is based on groups. Here, a topic to be researched on is given to more than one student. Students of the degree course are usually divided into small groups and given topics related to the subject whereby they research on them from the library by use of readings from books, from the internet and sometimes with reference to the lecture notes. Marks attained per group are the same mark that all students in the group get and is included in the total score of the subject.

Finally, assessments are both in the form of examinations and continuous assessment tests (C.A.T.s). Examinations are done by the students within the semester in which they were taken which constitutes 70% of the final mark. Examinations involve evaluation of the students' understanding of the course. Evaluation is the process of considering alternatives, checking of progress, and examining performance in an actual activity. It involves judging the value of something (Chelule, 2009). A candidate is not allowed to sit for a university examination if he or she has missed 20% of the required class attendance. The examination pass mark stands at 40% and is an application task done in three hours in writing. A minimum of four questions out of a maximum of six are answered in each examination. Sometimes a case study is included in the examination paper. Continuous assessment tests (CATs) go on throughout the time the student is learning in a given class, or is undergoing a course program. It includes the testing of skills learned, knowledge, and command of language and expression. These consist of short tests requiring short timing. Several methods are used in these types of assessments such as essays, objective tests, quizzes, projects and oral work. In the course, the CAT's are done twice per semester and the marks scored by the students are contributory to the final semester mark. Most of the CATs administered are in the form of essays.

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 And Presentation

4.1 Reliability Analysis

Cronbach's alpha was used to test the reliability of the data collected. The highest value stood at .911 while the lowest stood at .704. 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 teaching methods. Teaching methods had seven indicators with a Cronbach Alpha of .911 while the dependent variable had three indicators with a Cronbach alpha of .704.

4.2 Simple Regression Analysis

The regression model used in this study is given as;

$$Y = \alpha + \beta_1 X + \mu$$

Where Y – Relevance of the purchasing and supplies program at Moi University, X– Teaching methods, α – Constant term, β – Slope parameter and μ - 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 teaching methods, the sub independent variables averaged included:- project work, assignments, lectures, interactions, evaluations and liberty.

Table 4.0: Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval for B		Correlations			Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF
1.	(Constant)	.711	.201		3.537	.000	.304	1.189					
	X	.114	.026	.024	4.384	.000	.091	.201	.506	.383	.321	.769	1.304

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

4.2.1: The regression equation

$$Y = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \mu \text{ that is } Y = 0.711 + 0.024X + \mu_i$$

From the above model, we can note that there exist a positive relationship between relevance of the program and teaching

methods; $\beta_1 = 0.024$, is the sample parameter estimate of the population parameter β. It shows that when teaching methods improve by one unit percentage, relevance of the program improves by 2.4%. It follows then that a unit improvement in curriculum in terms of project work, assignments, lectures, interactions, evaluations and liberty will improve relevance of the program by 2.4% and vice versa.

4.2.2 T-tests (tests 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 ranged between 0.091 and 0.201 for the lower and upper bound

respectively with $\beta_1 = 0.024$. The true population parameter would lie in this range on 95 occassions out of one hundred occasions this parameter is estimated. The standard error of the estimate stood at 0.026. This is a small value which implies

a more reliable prediction of $\overset{\lower 3pt \hbox{$\scriptscriptstyle i$}}{\beta}_1$.

The sample estimate $\beta_1 = 0.024$ was found to be statistically significant at 1% level with 98 degrees of freedom with t_1 = 4.384. Teaching methods is a significant determinant of relevance of the program offered by Moi University. With this result, the hypothesis was rejected that teaching methods in the Purchasing and Supplies of Moi University is not significantly relevant to the work place.

4.2.3: Tests of Model Fit

Table 4.1: 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	.741(a)	.549	.499	.2145	.549	27.258	3	98	.000	1.386

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

In this research, R^2 was found to be 0.549. From this figure we can deduce that the simple regression of Y on X explains 54.9% of the variations in the dependent variable. R^2 of 54.9 % 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.

4.3: Conclusions

The main objective was to determine the relevance of the teaching methods and facilities employed in the program to the work place. Through factor analysis six significant factors were identified to significantly affect teaching and assessment methods: Project work, Assignments, Lectures, Interactions, Evaluations and Library.

Project work involves students working on their own on a task assigned to them. In this study project work included relating theoretical and practical aspects of the industry, that is, using projects within the industry to enable students develop critical thinking and undertake independent learning through research. It also entailed relating to research on specific topics of either students or lectures choice. The research projects undertaken to solve certain phenomenon are student driven which give the students an opportunity to be imaginative and creative. This learning enhances the relevance of education at the work place since tasks undertaken involve individuals. Regular class attendance is crucial for effective project learning.

Assignments undertaken in groups or by individuals are effective in enhancing skills such as teamwork. However, the effectiveness of the assignments as a teaching method may not be achieved as many students copy assignments from each other. Thus, if different approaches could be adopted to ensure that students are totally engaged in the exercise, then the relevance of the same would be positive. Although assignments could have some shortcomings owing to the large number

of students, it helps in developing students report writing skills which are much needed in the work place especially for management positions.

Lecture method of teaching was effective for large groups, therefore, it is very effective for the purchasing and supplies option as the number of students per class is large. In this method, the teacher is the main source of information and understanding thus lecturers dictate notes and explain where necessary. For some students, lectures are mandatory for their performance. However, the norm of giving notes does not affect those students who do not attend classes as they do not miss anything since they copy the notes from other students. This method can only be effective if lecturers have good oral communication skills, presentation and analytical skills. The method requires lecturers to undertake a lot of reading to enable them have good adequate subject matter in order to be able to answer questions raised by students effectively. Lectures are effective but depend a lot on the lecturers' skills as it's a more of a give and take method.

Interaction as a teaching method is undertaken using presentations, field trips, encouraging students to ask questions and lecturers questioning learners. This method exposes students to practitioners in the industry. It gives learners an opportunity to seek clarification and challenge ideas presented in lectures by the lecturer. In addition it makes lectures less lecturer-centred compared to pure lecture method. At least lectures can be inter-passed with discussion. There is no better teacher than experience thus it's a very crucial component necessary for the practical aspect. Students who interact a lot with the industry easily adopt when they are employed and can easily be considered for management positions. Interactions enhance the confidence of the students and create an image of a well baked student to the industry. However, it requires lecturers to strategize quickly on appropriate responses.

Evaluations are necessary to determine the rank of the best to the least. Purchasing and Supplies option evaluate students using continuous assessment tests and examinations which motivate students to undertake self study as they require each person to answer questions on their own. However, when questions are set exactly as the notes, thereby requiring students to use their notes to answer, it ceases to be an effective method of evaluation as students do not have to think in the examinations but instead 'download' the notes given by lecturers. Hence, students may not be effective in their discipline but pass exams which eventually has a reflection on the programs as the grades are used by the industry to judge the students capacity which may be different from their capability and abilities.

Finally, liberty entails students having the freedom to choose courses and areas of specialization. It is important for students to study what they enjoy as it will be relevant when they finally seek for employment. However, it seems that students need a lot of guidance in choosing the area of specialization which may require a lot of advice on the best choice. When students make the right choice on the area of specialization, they develop a lot of interest in all aspects of the course and easily internalize what they are taught better hence they may eventually end up performing better in the work place.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations
5.1 Conclusion
From this study, a conclusion can be drawn based on the independent variable, teaching methods, and its effect on the dependent variable, relevance of PS program to the work place.

Teaching and assessment methods significantly affect the relevance of the Purchasing and Supplies program to the work place. The factor analysis result, indicate that out of twenty teaching and assessment methods in the questionnaire, only five did not attain a value of over 0.6. In addition, the regression results indicated that teaching and assessment methods were significant in explaining the relevance of the Ps to the work place.

5.2 Recommendations

There is a need for utilization of more case studies as a teaching method in order to bridge the gap between what is taught in class and what happens in the real work place. It gives the learners an opportunity to apply new knowledge and skills in trying to solve the problem at hand, and to exercise their critical thinking, problem solving and analytical skills through discussions. Furthermore, it allows students to explore for solutions to complex issues.

Academic field trips should be increased to enable interaction of students with the industry to enhance the relevance of the course to the work place. Currently trips are taken more as leisure and less as an academic component. Trips organized should be geared more towards academic than leisure in order to give students an opportunity to interact with the real business world. Industrial attachment component should also be taken more seriously as a way of enhancing interactions.

Research component should be developed through stocking of the library with more books to encourage a reading culture. Notably is the limited number of books in the PS option and also establishment of an accessible e-library.

Assignments given to students should encourage research and different topics should be assigned to each student to avoid them just copying from one another which hampers the attainment of the set goals. To enhance practical learning, the university should liaise with top industry players to capture their inputs and create forums for interactions with the students.

There is need to use more class presentations and group work to prepare students for the business environment. Presentations enhance confidence while group work help students inculcate teamwork and personal development of a student which are greatly needed in the work place.

Evaluation needs to arouse innovation hence should be more research based as opposed to examinations that put a lot of emphasis on theoretical output. This is a debatable issue which may be more applicable and appropriate for post graduate students who can work independently. However, evaluation should have more application questions hence lecturers should avoid questions that encourage students to 'download' notes. In addition the research component needs more emphasis to enable students understand the goings on in the work place.

The university should improve the computer lab and emphasize more on practicals than theory. Notably is the fact that the use of computers has become mandatory in every establishment. Computerized systems should be included in the teaching menu with a special focus on purchasing and supplies software to help the students blend well in the industry. In addition, modern pedagogical methods should be used in teaching such as PowerPoint. Students should also be exposed to various computer packages which are relevant to the workplace.

Other instructional methods of teaching should be adopted such as cooperative learning, panel of experts, demonstration/modeling, brainstorming, discussion and problem based learning. Use of different methods may impact on the students positively as one method may be more effective to other students than others hence all will benefit.

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