

Towards Enhancing Academic Standards And Ethical Professionalism At Public Universities.

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ABSTRACT

Institutions of learning particularly universities in Africa have been experiencing some challenges. Here in Kenya these challenges include lack of funds (cash straps), poor management of resources, appointment into positions of power men and women not well trained in leadership and management thus lacking in skills required to run those institutions. At times these institutions are affected by strikes based on the staff or student unions' demands. The elevation of various technical colleges into university status in the last few years coincided with a period of rapid expansion in the university expansion in Africa. This has been due to demographic and political pressures that had developed from the years of colonial and previous regimes neglect. Demographically and during the last decades, university education was perceived to be a preserve of a few and most those who supported the status quo of some dictatorial and tyrannical government. Hence these institutions were being built in those areas where the political class had a wide range of followers. In recent times most African states have had political and economic transformation and as such university education has been liberalized to the extent that almost every country has its own university. It is during this time most private and public universities have emerged. The expansion has taken place at a time when drought, ethnic tension and overall decline in the macro-economic sector, have had negative effects even on the government to be able to finance these institutions. These challenges have really affected the productivity level of public universities as some of their employees have resulted to "moonlighting" and some joining the private sector altogether due to attractive payment. One can easily observe that the impressive expansion of the student enrolments in these institutions has been achieved without a proportionate rise in resources. The most applicable and relevant question would therefore be whether public universities' rapid expansion has exceeded their capacity to sustain quality education thus making the graduates to give back to the community. Have our public universities been able to produce job-creators instead of job seekers? This article highlights some of the challenges and threats to better education and research and proposes few ideas that could be applied to assist public universities maintain their reputation and their n level of academic professionalism.

Key Words: ENHANCING, UNIVERSITY EDUCATION, STANDARDS AND PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

1. INTRODUCTION

Public institutions and particularly public universities in Africa have been experiencing some challenges. Here in Kenya these challenges include lack of funds (cash straps), poor management of resources and appointment into positions of power men and women not well trained in leadership thus lacking in skills required to run those institutions. At times these institutions are affected by strikes based on the staff or student unions' demands (Ekong, 1994).

The elevation of various technical colleges into university status in the last few years coincided with a period of rapid expansion in the university education in Africa due to demographic and political pressures that had developed from the years of colonial and previous regimes neglect. At the colonial period for example, Kenya had only King George Royal College now the University of Nairobi. Kenyatta and Moi regimes created, Kenyatta, Egerton, Moi and Jomo Kenyatta, Maside Muliro, and Maseno universities respectively while rapid expansion was achieved during the Kibaki ten year rule (2002-2012). It should be noted that during the Kenya African National Union (KANU) regime in Kenya, university education was perceived to be a preserve of the politically correct and their closest allies to those in power. Hence these universities were being built in those areas where the regime had a following. The history behind this trend would have been that some counties particularly those from the Central and Eastern regions of Kenya were considered to be home for liberal and critical minds of the status quo or even associated with Mau Mau remnants and their siblings.

The expansion and creation of today's universities in Kenya and Africa at large have taken place at a time when drought, ethnic tension, terrorism and overall decline in the macro-economic sector, have had negative effects even on the government to be able to finance these public institutions. These challenges have really affected the productivity level of public universities as some of their lecturers have resulted to "moonlighting" and some joining the private sector altogether. One can easily observe that the impressive expansion of the student enrolments in these institutions has been achieved without a proportionate rise in resources (Coombe, 1991). Consequently affirms Muthoni Mumo in the Daily Nation (DN 13th October 2012), "the market is oversaturated with degrees and some segments are characterized by high unemployment. Yet, practitioners in certain fields are still complaining of gaps in skills" Despite mass production of the educated people in these universities. What

has gone wrong with the African process of education? Is it in the teaching method or the applicability of what is being taught which must have created mass failures in the work place?

The most applicable and relevant question is therefore whether or not public universities' rapid expansion has exceeded their capacity to sustain quality education thus making the graduates to give back to the community. This article highlights some of the challenges and threats to better education and research and proposes few ideas that could be applied to assist public universities maintain their reputation not only here in Africa but across the globe as well.

2. INDICATORS OF UNSATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

There have been some fears in some quarters that academic standards in Africa's public universities have been declining. Some of those charged with the daily running and steering these universities nevertheless, have been denying and challenging those with such fears to produce touchable evidence failure to which the allegations remain controversial, malicious and fallacious (Mulya, 1994). Without a clear research and in the absence of performance criteria such a common examinations for all candidates in similar programs across these universities, it is difficult to confirm or even deny if indeed standards have fallen.

Despite the denial by those charged with the responsibility of leading and managing public universities in Africa, and considering the growing negative perceptions in the continent's about the future of the graduates, it is imperative for each university to undertake a self-evaluation/assessment and determine if indeed conditions exist that threaten academic standards and then evolve some strategies for alleviating them so as to enhance their level of academic excellence and the spirit of professionalism.

The performance of an academic institution can be gauged by many indicators, but perhaps the more conspicuous are;

- the quality of examinations and the related results;
- the number of student applicants into programmes measured against declared capacities;
- The finishing rate and the stability of students.
- university administration students' and public relations;
- the performance of graduates in the job markets; and
- The participation of academic staff in pursuit and discovery of knowledge through research and relevant publications.

A few words on some of these indicators and their impact in the area of technology and beyond would be important. It should however be noted that these indicators could easily fit in other institutions of high learning whether arts, humanities or technologically oriented. Being a social scientist himself, the author of this article will make an attempt to argue that education is only relevant if and when it is useful and applicable to the people's needs. To train engineers, technologists, or even food scientist whose level of their history, philosophy and religious values is almost below average, would really be of less value in Africa. The same must be said about those who are knowledgeable in arts, music and humanities, if they failed to understand the digital and technological world of today. University education should lead the way in a holistic human development.

a) Performance in University Examinations

University examinations should be the key to the expected outputs by graduates. Where students have tended to perform poorly, the level of socio-economic has always gone down. What has eluded many senates or managers in African universities is that the overall student performance has in recent past exceeded the pass rate. Since the examinations must be assumed to have been moderated, failures can only imply that about half of the student population has been performing below expectation and the underlying causes affect the basic and applied sciences more than humanities and arts oriented subjects. Probably time is ripe for the managers of these universities to start training their students on talent-education basis. This means that those who are good as engineering, food processing, arts and humanities, must be given the required assistance to achieve their natural-given talents.

b) Popularity of the institution and its Programmes

The public perception of an institution may indirectly be reflected in the level of competition for entry into its advertised programmes. Among the school applicants for many years only a small number applies to technical colleges. Further some school candidates prefer more urban centered institutions. Hence there is every reason to evaluate reasons and establish the underlying factors behind these applicants' preferences. Part of it may have to do with the fact that programmes in some universities have continued to reflect traditional disciplines without change that emphasizes current job market demands. It may also be that some universities in general, poorly advertised or even spend less in reaching the people through the social media and other modes of communication. Do universities in Africa have adequate community outreach programmes that invite the local people to entertain their existence within them? It should be noted that not even the some of the oldest

universities such Dar-es-salaam, Makerere, or University of Nairobi have had enough community outreach programmes which would have enabled it to convert most their surrounding environment into a university cities. Whatever the reasons, the negative perceptions in the mind of students at some African universities against their choice carry the risk of precipitating poor performance in examinations.

c) Under Exposure in Discovery and Review of Knowledge

With a few exceptions from the Schools of Engineering, medicine and faculties of Commerce and Business Administration, some African universities' staff participation in the discovery of new knowledge and sharing of the same through research and publications appears to be going at a slow pace. Equally embarrassing is the diminished association with industries and private sectors which are crucial to future alternative financing of universities.

Alfred Amenya of Nairobi Polytechnic has observed that there are very few universities graduates interested in technical and engineering works. He says that should one visit construction sites "to find out how many qualified architects and engineers, it is mostly self-trained people" This argument is supported by Catherine Amino who notes that "the inability of the educational sector in Kenya for example, to meet the needs of the job market has been worsening since early 1970s." (DN 13th October 2012). Amino goes further and points out that "Kenya's institutions of higher education are producing graduates who do not have the problem solving expertise and the independence to thrive in today's job market." Amino is even more critical when she concludes that "the creativity that is vital to post – industrial, information driven economies has been systematically conditioned out of them" (Ibid.).

Probably and with the coming up of new type of universities' governance across Africa, this would be a simple task as most of the industries and other form of enterprises would be easily accessible.

3. ISSUES THREATENING ACADEMIC STANDARDS

a) Expansion of student Enrolment over Capacities

For the last few years for example, Kenya has been churning out an increasing number of university graduates. According to the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS), student enrolment in universities grew from 118,239 in 2007 to 198,260 in 2011. The number of registered universities also shot up from 41 in 2007 to 120 in 2011. An observation made by Patrick Mutisya, a senior human resource consultant at recruitment firm Manpower Services, is that these numbers were not necessarily driven by demand from the job market. "The job market is not demanding these degrees. Individuals who want certificates and articles are demanding these degrees."

As a result of the above observation, the most pressing problem of education in universities in Kenya and Africa at large, is how to cope with the pressure of rapidly expanding student numbers under conditions of limited or declining resource allocation in a manner that will preserve the quality of training (Hughes and Mwiria, 1990).

As the economic conditions have deteriorated, most African governments have become less benevolent towards universities than in earlier times, so that today a sharp ambiguity tends to characterize official attitudes to the institutions of higher learning. It is apparent here in Africa that the political class tends to consolidate their political power through manipulation and misuse of the the less educated. Hence university education appears not to be of any significance. Though on one hand the university education is valued as an important symbol of national attainment where almost every parent would like to take his/her child, and as means of empowerment to the nation. On the other hand, universities are feared as sources of criticism, liberal, dissent and at best must be left to fend themselves (Hughes and Mwiria, 1990; Republic of Kenya 1988; and World Bank 1994).

Due to this rapid expansion there appears to be congestion everywhere starting from the lecture theatres, dining halls, academic field trips, to the playing grounds. This is even worse where students are accommodated in small hostels and they have to share everything available to make ends meet. The situation is even getting worse with various governments insisting on the number of students admitted at a particular university without paying much attention to the same students' living facilities. The hours spend on the road travelling from the institutions of higher learning and back have had great impact on students' performance.

The large numbers of admission have also led to low quality kind of education because the larger the class the less attention it is given by the respective lecturers. Parallel or school based programmes being practiced in Kenya for example, have really interfered with university education. A twin problem arising from these programmes is that university lecturers have had much less time to mark examinations, and have had no break and they end up being overly exhausted and without much time to publish and research.

Over enrolment of students, results in overloads on academic staff in several ways: Large numbers of students, as often registered in some core courses where figures frequently exceed the international ratio, imply that the marking and grading of examination scripts becomes menacingly tedious. This coupled with the relay semester system which keeps staff in lecture theatres continuously throughout the year translates to unbearable fatigue.

Such worn out staff are barely in position to up-date their lecture notes, their curriculum vitae as well as undertake research commitments including publishing. This problem is exacerbated by resignations by some lecturers from the university which leaves the few remaining staff with even heavier teaching burdens. For instance, there are cases where a particular lecturer teaches six units within his/her university and several others in other universities. One is left to guess the level of quality and academic standards one would get from such a lecturer. Having being an academic dean for many years and in a number of universities in Kenya, the writer of this article has always wondered about this aspect of university education. Why would African universities admit thousands of students or even allocate excessive numbers of students to a single lecturer?

Due to the large numbers of students, and dependence on part-time lecturers, there is little time if any on academic advising, subject combinations, study habits, and career advancement. Consequently, many students fail to get extra academic assistance from their respective lecturers, make poor combination of subjects and have little appreciation of career demands and professional ethics. The cost has been poor performance in examinations and inability to compete for scarce jobs on the market all across Africa.

As observed by Winnie Kenduiywa, the Director of Recruitment Consultants (DN 13th October 2012), “Degree holders ... are expensive, restless and not always qualified to perform the jobs that they are seeking. Many graduates rely too heavily on their education and fail to work on other areas that are critically needed, especially their attitude towards work and life. . . .” The question still remains; what is ailing university education in Africa and beyond? Why are some companies opting to recruit diplomats other than the university graduates?

b) Low Academic Staff Morale

Over the last few years morale among University academic staff has been considerably subdued. Matters have taken a turn for the worse during the past years due to inability or unwillingness of the part of government to negotiate with the same staff.

Comparing themselves with other government workers, university staffs earn “peanuts” and in most cases they cannot even sustain their families or even contribute to charitable organizations. The salary of a university lecturer is not even a percent closer to what or even comparable to those earned by other counterparts in private sector. Hence one key reason the African universities are unable to attract and retain high caliber staff is that salaries and overall terms of service compare poorly when contrasted with the private sector or international positions (Coombe, 1990). Even worse, inflationary spirals in the cost of living in Africa over the last few years mean that the basic salary of the academic staff would have to be reviewed on upward trends. This requires that African Universities engage themselves and their respective staff in harmonizing monies necessary for one’s survival or that which is necessarily required to maintain quality education in Africa.

Apart from the basic salary, there is a need to expand the non-taxable allowances to minimize the erosion of net income to taxation. Worse still, non-salary benefits such as medical schemes have virtually collapsed due to non payment for services or premiums. The implications of inadequate remunerations are that staffs scavenge for supplementary incomes through consultancies, part-time teaching, running self-business and moonlighting over. This means that there is less time available for research, teaching and updating university curricula.

In other instances some staffs have no office space at all; at times some share at the rate of two to three per office. The resultant congestion is un-conducive for either lecture note preparation or consultation with needy students. Furthermore, research facilities particularly in the basic and applied physical and engineering units, are totally inadequate, and the situation is worsened by a library with few if any updated journals/books. The prevalence of these factors has created an academic environment that is undesirable and disabling to both the learner as well as the resource persons in almost all African universities. This has caused ‘brain drain’ kind of migration to other parts of the world and in search of better livelihood. Though Africa is endowed with resources which could easily be accessed through quality university education, due to inadequate support of university professors and key researchers, these resources have been left undiscovered and idle. When these educated people opt to leave their countries for better pay abroad, their African continent is left to corrupt political survivors who care less about those millions of people wallowing in poverty.

The appointment and promotions procedures are at times characterized by features that are potentially dampening of staff morale. At times the process is slow and takes time before the necessary documents are processed, and interviews called for. When the interviews are finally called, vital documents such letters from referees and former employees may be declared missing, a problem that could have been detected through prior checking of files.

There are also some complaints that the criteria used for promotion are either not clearly spelt out or are inconsistently applied. At times some lecturers are promoted on tribal and parochial levels. The fact that Masters Degree holders can be promoted from Assistants to lecturers ranks after a few years of service without a requirement for publications means that the extra training achievement acquired by PhD and ED holders who

start as lecturers, is poorly accorded. Those promoted without fulfilling the required criteria achieve their academic objectives yet down in their hearts they could be feeling inadequate in many other ways.

It is also noted that the ranking order in terms of service couples academic and administrative positions (example, a deputy registrar is equivalent to associate professor or even a finance officer and without proper credentials accorded the professorial status). Further it should be noted that, the criteria and process of promotion are often less stringent and faster to fulfill for the administrative cadre than the academic staff.

It is apparent too that major university academic administrative positions such as Head of Departments, Directors and Co-coordinators of academic boards and institutes, are often made without consultation with the senate or deans/director of schools. This has sometimes given rise to appointment of individuals that lack the necessary qualifications and competencies, and subsequently poor administration of academic programs. As a consequence of some of these negative features of the campus environment, some universities have been unable to attract or even retain staff in teaching positions. Evidently there has been almost a mass exodus from the public institutions to the private sectors including universities.

c) Inadequacies in Examination Process and Quality

The **integrity of the examination process**, the results and authenticity of transcripts are increasingly being questioned in a number of public universities, and there are apparently grounds for the prevailing skepticism among students, staff and the general public.

Poor Quality of the Examination and the Diminishing Role of External Examiners. This has also raised concern in almost all African universities. This could have been as a result of poor compensation of the external examiners most of whom are also given papers which do not belong to their area of specialization. What would a social scientist be doing moderating an engineering or medicine paper? What quality work would an engineering external examiner give to a history or music paper? Some of the worst cases could be remedied by **critical review by external examiners**. Unfortunately, the traditional role of external examiners which included the broad review of the departmental capacities to mount programmes has been eroded to simple moderation of examinations. Worse still, this restricted role is poorly executed by some who simply flip through a few scripts and leave behind incomplete reports.

The **students enrolments** that were alluded to earlier have forced some lecturers to give less extensive memory/recall types of examinations that are easier to mark but do not challenge the students adequately on synthesis and applications. The large student numbers have also forced lecturers to reduce the frequency of the continuous assessment tests and eliminate project managements. With the e-learning in place, the situation of students getting adequate contact hours has been deteriorating. How would one teach a micro-economic or some computer application courses online?

Cheating in examinations, which appears to be occurring in some examinations, is a major threat to academic standards and part of its origins lie in large numbers of students in congested examination halls or laxity in invigilation by some members of staff. Where students have been caught cheating the time lag between the incidence and the disciplinary committees processing the cases is often so long that vital evidence is lost and the chances of fair judgment diminished. In these instances several cheating candidates get away with the crime thus creating doubts in the integrity of examination systems.

Students have often complained of **discrepancies whereby grades shown in transcripts** are not consistent with those awarded by examiners. Most of the reported cases are those where the transcripts grade happens to be lower than that reflected in the mark sheet. There are probably several other cases, unreported for the convenience of the students, where transcripts grades are accidentally or deliberately inflated.

d) Restrictions from Over structured curricula

The current arrangements in some universities where all students in particular programmes have to take all prescribed courses and move at the same pace from one year to the next is limitation to the more talented students or individuals. The issue has become more critical with the shift in government monetary policy towards cost sharing which may require that candidates complete their studies as rapidly as possible to save costs, or that they suspend school for a period of time to be able to undertake money earning work study. Where on the other hand, degree programmes have developed more liberalized curricula allowing for subject choices, many students do not fully understand the implications of subject combinations.

e) Curtailing of academic freedom

There are indications that freedom of academic expression is not fully encouraged in some universities and in a few cases, this freedom has been directly subdued. In the past years guest speakers invited by schools/faculties have been denied the opportunity to address the respective university communities. The reasons for denying these guests access to some African universities have not been explained clearly and guidelines on procedures for inviting them may be lacking. Such measures obviously stifle academic freedom and creativity.

The inaugural lecture series by staff that have been promoted to professorialship is a practice that offers opportunity for exchange of ideas and experience gained by the elite in the academic community. Despite this advantage, there is little encouragement to the launching of this intellectual discourse at most public universities. While no reason has been given to this laxity, stalemate can only hurt academic excellence.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS ON ENHANCING ACADEMIC STANDARDS

It is clear that a wide range of issues that impact on the academic environment have been raised. The recommendations herein do not embrace all the problems that were identified as some apply to some universities while others do not. Nevertheless some detailed remedies are proposed on matters that directly threaten the quality of education in almost all African universities.

a) Marching student enrolment and available resources

It is proposed that each university should be ready to declare its capacity and avoid overloading itself with more students in search of more money. The core function of any university is to teach and research. Considering that each university is to excel in these two areas, considerable effort should converge at solicitation of government support for the completion and attainment of such a function. Further the universities should have committees assigned to this task as well as linking the said institutions to relevant industries.

b) Improving academic advisory services to students

The process of student academic advising should be introduced in all public universities with the following objectives:

- Guidance to students on subject combinations vis-à-vis programme requirements and market trends
- Assistance to students on appropriate study habits, time resource management, proper use of library, preparations for examinations and striking a proper balance between academic and social activities.
- Development of professional ethics

Further academic advisory services should be a decentralized process based at the department/school/faculty of the student's major field of study. Consequently each student should be assigned a qualified academic supervisor. There should be a student advisory co-coordinator in each department and all academic supervisors should be remunerated as an incentive for extra work. Upon admission, each student should be issued with the department/school/faculty prospectus detailing the academic programmes, subject combination and regulations that should be followed.

c) Re-institution of teaching and course evaluations

Although teaching is a core taking slightly over 75% of most academic staff time, there are no mechanisms in place to measure the quality of performance in some universities. This article recommends that a process be initiated to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching in African universities.

- Information gathered from the above evaluation exercise should be used to advice and counsel staff who may require improvements and as part of promotion criteria and as a basis for awards for academic excellence.
- Universities should develop a teaching evaluation form as an instrument applicable to all the staff. The form should be simple to score, the data gathered should be amenable to quantitative analysis and computer aided summaries. This process should start from the respective department upwards to the academic divisions for processing.
- Continuous Assessment tests and other assignment should be assigned more weight than the ordinary examinations. The latter is always a means to enhance self-research from the library and electronic resources.
- Where possible and apart from the numerical grade lecturers should be mandated to write progressive academic reports on each student's capability, strengths and weakness in each unit taught in order to avoid reducing students' performances to mere numerical grade.
- If the evaluation so indicates, corrective measures, including exposure to pedagogical training should be instituted to improve the teaching competence of staff.

d) Establishment of an awards scheme for academic excellence

- There should be a re-vitalization of a scheme at the universities that would solicit for scholarships and other awards and grant the same to students and staff that have made sterling achievements in their studies or teaching duties respectively.
- The initial search for award donors and preparation of worth recipient lists should be coordinated by the quality assurance officers within each university in conjunction with department/schools/faculties. However all relevant summaries should be tabled at the respective deans' committees that should finally make the award. A pre-graduation ceremony should be in place to present the said awards.

e) Enhancing staff morale and commitment to the university

The quality of university education is intricately interwoven with the caliber of its academic staff, their motivation and commitment to the university itself. There are several measures which any university may consider in uplifting its staff morale among them;

- Contractual terms of services should be made available to staff and made more attractive than in the private sector or civil servants. For example, non-taxable allowances such as car, teaching, marking and responsibility allowances. Additionally the minimum starting salary for a lecturer should not be less than the required salary of the most senior government officer, and all other grades adjusted accordingly and that regular adjustments are made to cater for market trends and cost of living.
- Even more important, non-salary benefits need to be improved. For example, the quality of medical services including provision of drugs at the universities' health centers. There is also a need to better manage the universities' staff pension scheme as well as reduce burden of housing mortgage loans through provision of collateral and/or reduction of interest rates.
- Criteria for promotion and recruitment should be well established and followed scrupulously on the basis of merit but not patronage or tribal affiliations as appears to be happening in some universities. In addition, the process of interviews for staff reviews, promotion and recruitment should be regularized so that unnecessary delays are minimized and that everyone who deserves a review is given a fair chance.
- Excessive teaching and marking overloads which threaten the quality of education can be reduced by; aggressive recruitments to reduce the high vacancy rates as proposed through the full time equivalent (FTE). Emphasis should also be given on students seeking knowledge for themselves in the library and especially from the electronic resources like the internet. There is a wealth of knowledge in Google, YouTube among other modern technologies.
- Those universities still operating under the relay/or trimester basis should look for a system that would take them to the two-semester of fifteen weeks, with two weeks in each semester devoted to examinations.

f) Reducing crippling bottlenecks in the university administration

High academic stands of any university can be sustained only in a well administered environment wherein both the human and physical resources are properly managed. There are many facets to improving university management capacity and the article has recommended the following:

- The technical and administrative competence of heads of department/schools/faculties is crucial for the academic viability of a university. It is therefore recommended that their choice be made after a careful review that involves search committees. Consideration should be given to elevating departmental/school/faculty headship to substantial post, offered by the universities respective councils.
- None of the activities of universities including operation of academic programmes will function without a stringent fiscal management system in place. The article recommends restructuring of some departments to enable them render their services more efficiently to the universities communities. Such departments would include finance and procurement. This includes decentralization of the financial management processes so the vote holders can have greater control of their allocations, reduction in time and bureaucracies; and the strengthening of the internal audit system which at times appears unable to account for public resources thus creating loopholes for corruption. Estates and transport departments need to be better supervised so that timely maintenance and transport operations on buildings, vehicles and grounds can be undertaken to avert severe and costly deteriorations.

g) Sustaining the quality of examinations and authenticity of transcripts

Examination process including the quality of examination questions, confidentiality, reliability of examinations' records and transcripts are probably the key pulse by which the academic stands of a university is measured. All forms of negligence and threats to the quality of this process must therefore be minimized at all costs. In this regard the article recommends that;

- Stringent and confidential internal moderation of examination questions be encouraged.
- External examiners should be more carefully selected so that experienced individuals are identified, who will not only moderate the examinations but also advise on the physical and staff capacities of the departments.
- Examination cheating and malpractices should be minimized if not eliminated through more rigorous invigilation and administration of deterrent punishments, including expulsion of the culprits.
- If necessity demands, students should be allowed to see their raw marks on examination scripts to remove any doubts regarding fairness of marking.

- Discrepancies in the final academic transcripts should be minimized through authentication of these transcripts by the deans of schools/faculties, academic registrars and the academic divisions.

h) Encouragement of academic freedom

The opportunity to freely exchange ideas on all matters of social and scientific origin is a major hallmark of a university system if the institution is ready to retain its role in the generation of knowledge and scrutiny or review of existing assumptions. To this end, public universities in Kenya and Africa at large should encourage open academic debates on their respective campuses through for example, public and inaugural lecture series, departmental/schools/faculty seminars discussion among others.

CONCLUSION

If one was to assess the academic standards in all public universities in Kenya he/she must be ready to do so from all angles and without any bias. The enhancement of academic standards therefore invites each and every individual within those institutions to go beyond the ordinary teaching method, examinations, marking and grading processes. It is not also enough to insist on technological and pure sciences course where individuals end up becoming stale and empty in their other disciplines associated with humanities and social sciences. While practical and market oriented course are important, the individual must also articulate their history, culture and religious values on the people they are to serve. Standards education therefore go beyond the classroom; it calls for one to be accountable, transparent and responsible in all areas of human operation.

The process of enhancement of academic standards in Kenya and Africa at large must therefore be holistic and people driven; it must be education oriented towards a holistic approach to humanity. Consequently African government should be ready to invest more in educating; rewarding and maintaining those they have spent much time educating. This way, the African continent will no longer wallow in poverty or even be referred to as undeveloped as its own people will be able to run their own affairs. It is only through proper investment into education affairs that the African people will be in a position to adequately govern themselves without waiting for economic handouts from foreign nations.

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