

The Will ...but...the Way: Students' Reflections on the Pursuit of Higher Education in Peace and Security Studies amidst Resource Challenges in Universities

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Abstract

Discourse on resource challenges in universities continue to characterize quality teaching and learning (QTL) in higher education (HE) in Africa. Instructional resources, especially the teaching and learning facilities remain the primary inputs into HE systems, particularly those keen on producing quality outputs (graduands). But the true value of these resources and their impact on QTL may not be easy to determine unless the systems incorporate concrete feedback from the customers of HE-the students. Using the Critical Social Theory and the Systems Approach to Education, this study sought to establish students' perceptions of the quality of teaching and learning facilities in peace and security academic programmes offered in Kenyan Universities. The study found that whereas Kenyan universities continue to demonstrate the will to produce quality peace and security intellectuals to respond to the increased demand for highly trained security personnel in the country, their capacity to offer these courses in light of the available facilities remains low. There is therefore need for universities to invest more in teaching and learning facilities in order to fully meet their QTL obligations.

1. Background

The first decade of the 21st Century has seen efforts made by African Universities to develop quality academic programmes in peace and security studies (Haris, 2010; Asembo, 2008). By 2004, thirty four (34) universities in Africa, including one in Kenya, and four tertiary colleges, were offering courses in peace studies (Haris, 2010). The Africa Department of the University of Peace in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, later on rejuvenated the state of affairs, though her efforts have not completely solved the quality teaching and learning (QTL) issues surrounding higher education (HE) in peace and security studies. In Kenya, the period ushered in the security sector reforms agenda. This placed an obligation on the Government to open more democratic space and intensify training of security personnel in order to deal with diverse peace and security challenges, which included the threat of terrorism, an indifferent police force, political violence, cattle rustling, inter-ethnic tension, criminal gangs, and organized crime. (Bonn International Centre for Conversion-BICC, 2005; Republic of Kenya, 2008).

Public security institutions, as a result, began to cooperate with universities and consequently developed certificate, diploma and degree courses in order to improve the quality of their manpower (Kenya Police, 2004; Asembo, 2008). The ultimate objective of the paradigm shift was to improve governance by broadening Kenya's national security responsibility to include not just the safeguarding of the country from both internal and external vulnerabilities but to equally encompass human security. Hence, universities began to offer courses in peace and conflict studies, criminology, security management, forensic investigations and intelligence studies, among others. The scenario has subsequently ignited discourses regarding the quality of the academic programmes offered and the capacity of the universities to deliver them. The debates are crucial given the recent explosion in the quest for University education in Kenya and the fact that peace and security studies are still underdeveloped in most African universities (Harris 2010; Gudo, Oanda and Olol, 2011; Asembo, 2008; Kinyanjui, 2007).

While reporting on QTL in HE institutions in Kenya, researchers have emphasized that QTL may not be guaranteed amidst escalating student population in Kenyan universities, since the teaching staff have little time to give their students full attention (Mengo, 2011, Kairu, 2011; Gudo, Oanda and Olol, 2011; Kinyanjui, 2007). Nonetheless,

Sifuna (2012) has particularly itemised the issue of infrastructure availability and quality, which he laments severely constraints teaching and research in most institutions in Africa. In his opinion, teaching effectiveness continues to be diluted by inadequate facilities, laboratory equipment and computing infrastructure. Moreover, non-availability of research resources is a primary contributor to the continuous brain-drain of academic professionals to more developed nations and QTL cannot be guaranteed within such scenario.

Given the critical role of QTL in meeting the demand for highly qualified peace and security personnel by the Republic of Kenya, an examination of the existing teaching and learning resources in universities and their contribution to QTL in Peace and Security Studies is categorical. It is within this framework that this study set out to determine students' perception of quality of the teaching and learning facilities in the peace and security academic programmes offered in Kenyan universities.

2. Research Question

The study attempted to answer the following research question:

- What is the perception of students regarding the quality of teaching and learning facilities in the peace and security academic programmes offered in Kenyan Universities?

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 Critical Social Theory

Critical social theory (CST) has been used in this study as the basis for diagnosing the perception of students regarding the quality of teaching and learning facilities in the peace and security academic programmes. CST is a form of science that aims to free persons from the intellectual limitations that hamper their full interaction and participation in their social environments (Vlades 2002; Leonardo, 2004). It seeks to de-familiarize reality by examining the ingredients of tradition as contextualized within a given culture and replaces them with liberal discourse. It is one way of empowering the voiceless through critical reflection on hegemony as embedded in the structures and functions of society (Stevens 1989; Thompson 1987). Allen *et al* (1986) contends that the power relations are reinforced by certain social and cultural boundaries, which people are expected to adhere to. By putting criticism at the centre of knowledge production CST seeks to counter the barriers which define social interaction by identifying inherent paradoxes and re-examining mindsets and models. In QTL, therefore, criticism inculcates in the student an inquisitive mind, which is able to deconstruct, and then reconstruct knowledge in the interest of liberty (Leonardo, 2004).

In this study, students' perceptions of quality teaching and learning facilities is part of their critical engagement with the curriculum. This has enabled the study to bring on board the discourse on the quality of the teaching and learning resources in peace and security academic programmes in universities in Kenya, with a view to suggesting policy interventions for improving the programmes in light of available facilities. This study relies on Shor's (1993) reflections that CST encourages students to give their opinions on challenges facing the learning process, rather than wait until all the solutions to teaching and learning problems are found. Instead, it creates an intellectual space for them by posing the quality of teaching and learning facilities as an educational problem, so that students can critically examine it and develop new perspectives, which would facilitate better engagements with their academic programmes.

3.2 Systems Theory of Education

Scholars explain that a system is a set of interrelated components that interact in a unique way as a unit in order to achieve a common goal (Olasunkanmi and Mabel, 2012; Potts and Hagan, 2000; Anderson and Carter, 1990). Systems operate by admitting inputs from the outside environment, transforming them and thereafter releasing them as outputs back to the environment. The inputs in an education context include materials, human, financial, or information resources used by the institution to produce quality education. In HE system, the material inputs include infrastructural facilities such as laboratories, library and lecture halls provided by the institution for teaching and learning purposes. Other aspects of the system are transformation process, feedback and the environment (Draft, 2008). Potts and Hagan (2000:133) further explain that open systems continuously exchange energy with the environment and may be distinguished by their degree of 'negentropy' (the tendency of a living system to import more energy than it exports and therefore continue to remain vibrant) versus 'entropy' (the tendency of a system to export more energy than it maintains leading to system wear out and eventual collapse). To Potts and Hagan, the system inputs are capable of giving alerts on the need for change while

outputs can alter the system and realign it to a healthy functioning. The system feedback is the information hub that reports on its status and functioning, hence vital in making it remain operational through corrective measures. In this study therefore, the place of teaching and learning facilities as educational inputs cannot be overstated. Students' perceptions of the quality of teaching and learning facilities are therefore vital feedback components on the quality of inputs and help in revising or maintaining the instructional system of higher education in peace and security studies (HEPSS).

4. Literature Review

4.1 Role of Teaching and Learning Resources in Higher Education

Likoko, Mutsotso and Nasongo (2013) emphasize that the process of education involves the use of instructional resources as inputs, while the goals and outcomes of the process are outputs. Both inputs and outputs are mutually interdependent. The use of instructional resources is believed to reinforce student learning. In particular, creative use of learning resources such as visual aids in delivery of lessons has the potential of arousing interest in students and supplementing text books where there is scarcity. The authors further emphasize that for an educational system to respond fully to new societal demands, and improve on its quality, efficiency and productivity, it has to be fully equipped with better learning materials and resources such as textbooks, libraries, physical facilities and appropriate personnel plan.

Scholars have further reported a strong correlation between instructional resources and academic performance (Adeogun, 2001; Likoko, Mutsotso and Nasongo, 2013). UNICEF (2000) has therefore defined quality education to include learning environments that have adequate resource and facilities. Schools with adequate teaching and learning resources have been found to perform better than those without. Hence, the quality and quantity of the teaching and learning resources experienced by a learner determines the quality of education (Gogo, 2002; Fuller, 1986; Mwiria, 1985). Other scholars have emphasised the role of educational resources in retention of learning. Ayot (1984) explains that of all that is learnt, only one tenth of what is heard is retained in learner's memory compared to eighty percent or more of what is seen. This implies that an investment in more visual teaching and learning aids would greatly improve the quality of teaching and learning. Similarly, Maundu (1987) has itemised instructional resources as significant factor in disparities in academic achievement of students across educational institutions. The author agrees with Makau (1986) that excellent educational outcomes are pegged on mobilization of adequate and relevant resources for both teachers and students. Muthamia (2009) equally concur that teacher enthusiasm; effectiveness and productivity are enhanced when they have adequate and relevant facilities. Heilig and Williams (2010) have however cautioned that student performance will not be improved solely by the availability of the resources but rather how they are used.

There is more evidence that the physical facilities equally play an important role in QTL. Likoko, Mutsotso and Nasongo (2013) further opine that differences in student achievements across institutions can be tied to the quality of physical facilities, hence the need to encourage educational institutions to develop and maintain physical facilities. These include classrooms, lecture theatres, auditoriums, administrative blocks, libraries, laboratories, workshops, play grounds, assembly halls, and special rooms like clinics, staff quarters, students' hostels, kitchen, cafeteria, and toilets. In addition, Sallis (2002) have indicated that the effective implementation of an educational programme cannot be guaranteed amidst poor quality physical facilities, even if an institution has excellent teachers. Whereas Ayoo (2002) established a strong relationship between availability of facilities and performance of learners in examination, Musau (2004) found that lack of library facilities was one of the most serious problems hampering QTL in learning institutions.

In their study of University Expansion in Kenya and Issues of Quality Education, Gudo, Olol and Oanda (2011) found that lack of enough lecture rooms was a significant factor that inhibited effective teaching and learning in public universities. More so, some students failed to get seating spaces within lecture rooms and would therefore attend lectures from outside. This eventually results into lack of concentration and diverted attention with the possibility of students memorizing lecture notes for purposes of passing examinations. Mwiria and Nyukuri (1994) equally notes that the current wave of university expansion in Kenyan which began in the 1990s constrains the available learning facilities leading to serious congestion and low level engagements between students and their lecturers. Eshiwani (2009) has similarly decried the demoralizing situation in universities, which subjects them to adverse working conditions and eventually resulting in a lowering of academic standards and of quality of graduates.

Gudo, Olol and Oanda (2011) further found that the quality of laboratory and workshop equipment in public universities was equally low. The same applied to the quality of computers. They also found that public universities neither had adequate print journals nor internet facilities for effective teaching and learning. Okwakol (2008) has

emphasized the role of the computer as the modern student-companion in higher education. It serves as among other things notebook, textbook, dictionary and library, hence universities which cannot perform at the digital platform cannot offer quality education. Firer (2008) and McLoughlin (2001) have particularly advocated for Virtual Peace Education in teaching peace studies. The authors note that the value of using computers in peace education is in their ability to provide information, enhance communication, and provide an imaginative and innovative environment; provide instructional resources to educators; and deliver instructions to students. They further emphasize that through the web based applications, 'students can link with other people at far locations and get to understand their perspectives, thereby increasing their multicultural knowledge. In another study, Odhiambo (2011) found that deteriorating physical facilities in Kenyan universities are part of the reasons behind the general decline in the competence of Kenyan graduates. Whitcomb and Tanya (2008), in agreement, explain that teachers must have the tools to do the job in order to perform highly.

The scenario was further affirmed by the World Bank (2000); Cheboi (2001) and Republic of Kenya (2006), which noted that fiscal challenges facing university education are due to inadequate allocation of monetary resources, a situation which they assert affects the quality of HE. Republic of Kenya (2006) in a report by The Public Universities Inspection Board particularly underscores the challenge of hastened growth in student numbers in public universities that has not been matched by expansion of physical facilities and academic infrastructure. Consequently, the existing infrastructure continues to be inadequate, dilapidated and unserviceable. The current fears are that university education in Kenya will turn into a delusion and pointless endeavour whose result will be mass production of university graduates who have the papers but limited skills (Gudo, Olel and Oanda, 2011). This review, though silent on HEPSS therefore underscores teaching and learning facilities as vital component of QTL. Hence within the framework of quality concerns within HEPSS, there is still need to establish the perceptions of the students regarding the quality of facilities available for these programmes.

5. Methodology

The study was a descriptive survey within the positivist-interpretivist research paradigm. Data was collected through random sampling by use of questionnaires and interviews from a total of 152 finalist and pre-finalist students undertaking diploma and undergraduate courses in peace and security academic programmes in five universities in Kenya (one private and four public). The questionnaire was a modified Service Performance (SERVPERF) instrument using a five-point Likert rating scale, which had the following scoring points: 5-strongly agree; 4-agree, 3- somewhat agree; 2-disagree, and 1- strongly disagree. The interviews involved both Focused Group Discussions (FGDs) and In-depth interviews. The data was analysed both qualitatively by coding into themes and categories and quantitatively by use of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 17.0.

During analysis, the data was re-coded into a three-point scoring scale with points 5 and 4 combined and re-coded to denote 'High agreement'; point 3 recoded to denote 'Moderate agreement' while points 1 and 2 were combined and re-coded to denote 'Low agreement'. Hamid and Zaidatol (2004: 73-4) concur that this kind of re-coding into a three point scale allows a 'more distinct focus' for interpretation of data. Quantitative analysis involved calculation of frequencies, percentages, mean scores and standard deviations. While presenting the data in tables, the variables have been itemised and ranked chronologically by mean scores. The proper nouns, referring to respondents, as used in the presentation of qualitative data are however, pseudonyms.

6. Findings

6.1 *Student's Perception of the Quality of Teaching and Learning Facilities in the Peace and Security Studies in Kenyan Universities*

The perception of students concerning the quality of teaching and learning facilities was measured using eight variables, itemised as 1-8. The items focused on use of up-to-date teaching materials, the visual appeal, adequacy and comfort of lecture halls; the convenience and availability for use of physical facilities; electronic access to relevant security studies information; the importance accorded to computer laboratory; the adequacy of workshop/ laboratory; adequacy of student library and professionalism of library staff.

The data are presented in Table 1 in the form of quality attribute, frequency, mean and standard deviations.

Table 1: Frequency, Percentage, Mean Score and Standard Deviations of Student's Perception of the Quality of Teaching and Learning Facilities in Peace and Security Studies

S/N	Quality Attribute	N	Frequency (f) and Percentage (%)						Mean Score	SD
			Low (f)	%	Mod (f)	%	High (f)	%		
1	Lecturers use up-to-date teaching materials and equipment.	152	7	4.6	30	19.7	115	75.7	2.7105	0.54750
2	The library staff is professional	152	22	14.5	32	21.1	98	64.5	2.5000	0.73692
3	Student library is adequate and equipped with up to date materials	152	37	24.3	33	21.7	82	53.9	2.2961	0.83657
4	The lecture halls are visually appealing, adequate and comfortable	152	37	24.3	39	25.7	76	50.0	2.2566	0.82588
5	Computer laboratory is taken as an important asset.	152	41	27.0	35	23.0	76	50.0	2.2303	0.84939
6	Physical facilities are convenient to students and available for use anytime	152	45	29.6	37	24.3	70	46.1	2.1645	0.85695
7	There is electronic access to relevant security studies information.	152	52	34.2	35	23.0	65	42.8	2.0855	0.87605
8	Workshop/ Laboratory is fully equipped and up to date	152	55	36.2	45	29.6	52	34.2	1.9803	0.84156
Overall Mean Score									2.2779	0.56732

Key: Low= Lower Agreement; Mod = Moderate Agreement; High = Higher Agreement; SD= Standard Deviation

Table 1 indicates that the highest mean score (Mean = 2.7105) was for item 1 focusing on use up-to-date teaching materials and equipment. This is followed by item 2 focusing on the professionalism of library staff, which has a moderate score (Mean= 2.5000). These scores suggest higher perceptions of lecturers' ability to utilize current teaching and learning resources but lower perceptions of the professionalism of the support personnel in charge of them. It is however noted that items 3-8 have lower mean scores on items focusing on the state of available teaching and learning facilities: student library, lecture halls, computer laboratory, workshop and laboratory, as well as electronic access and convenience of the physical facilities.

The lowest mean score of 1.9803 with SD of 0.84156 is for the item 'workshop/ Laboratory is fully equipped and up to date'. This suggests unfavourable perceptions of quality of workshops and laboratories. This further implies students' perception of a less effective practical teaching and learning. The overall low mean score for the table is 2.2779 with SD of 0.56732. This indicates an overall students' lower perception of the quality of teaching and learning facilities in the universities.

During in-depth interviews and FGDs, majority of the students indicated lower perceptions of the available teaching and learning resources in the universities. The students underscored the need for the institutions to equip their libraries with more current text books and computers; improve the ICT infrastructure; avail more laboratory facilities, improve classroom environments and size, avail public address systems for use in large lecture halls with large numbers of students; maintain physical facilities including toilets and; upgrade lecture halls to modern standards. Odera Chune, a degree student of criminology, noted:

Current books are difficult to get in the library, as most of those which are available are old. Most lecturers have not embraced the use of modern technology in teaching especially the use of PowerPoint presentations. They are still analogue in orientation. There is no forensic laboratory and investigation courses are usually supplemented by student seminars to make up for laboratory practicals. There is need for major renovations to improve the physical facilities.

Another student, Akwe Ogaji, who studies a diploma course in security management and police studies, and a practising police officer, equally noted:

Practicals ought to be taken seriously in order to help students familiarize with their area of specialization. For instance, the institution needs to develop a forensic laboratory, where tests and verifications can be done to enable students to confront future challenges, which they may encounter while on duty. Students should also be exposed to the equipment, which they use daily while on duty as firearms and should be taught their mechanisms.

A student of criminology, Okumu Jamagunga, stated as follows:

The University should endeavour to provide adequate and spacious lecture rooms since in most cases, the lecture rooms are too congested, especially for those units that are usually shared by credit transfer students. Use of microphones is necessary, especially in crowded lecture rooms. Some classes have no adequate lighting and students do strain. Most of the days, availability of water is a problem and the toilets are not clean.

Other students highlighted the need to improve the physical security of the institutions, thereby challenging the

universities to practice the security principles they teach. Aoro Nyobinga, a student of forensics and criminal investigations, made the following comment:

The institutions should improve the health and safety of the students in the physical facilities within their premises. The institution should ensure that every student accesses the premises with electronic cards to improve the current security situation.

The student's responses reflect the unfavourable state of teaching and learning facilities in universities in Kenya. The absence of a forensic laboratory, which is key in some courses under security studies, perhaps explains why students' satisfaction with these teaching and learning services is low. Even though some of the students with policing background may demand the inclusion of practical skill at arms lessons in the security studies, this might not be possible within the current situation, where majority of the students have no police training background. But it further suggests the need for the curriculum developers to include an optional unit that would meet the practical training needs of these types of students.

The findings reflect that the teaching and learning of peace and security studies programmes in Kenyan universities occurs in environments where educational facilities are inadequate. Hence, the delivery of quality teaching and learning in these programmes could be compromised in classroom environments that lack basic materials such as current textbooks and general teaching supplies. Whitcomb and Tanya (2008), in agreement, explain that teachers must have the tools to do the job in order to perform highly. Within this dialectic, UNICEF (2000) has defined quality education to include learning environments that have adequate resources and facilities. Similarly, Adeogun, (2001) and Likoko, Mutsotso and Nasongo, (2013) have reported a strong correlation between instructional resources and academic performance.

The low mean score for item 5 focusing on the use of computer laboratory (Mean= 2.2303) contrasts with the advocacies of Firer (2008) and McLoughlin (2001) on the importance of VPE in teaching peace. The authors note that the value of using computers in peace education is in their ability to provide information, enhance communication, and provide an imaginative and innovative environment; provide instructional resources to educators; and deliver instructions to students. They further emphasize that through the web based applications, 'students can link with other people at far locations and get to understand their perspectives, thereby increasing their multicultural knowledge.

The findings are further in concurrence with Gudo, Olol and Oanda (2011), who in their study to determine the perceptions of students, lecturers and administrators on the adequacy of resources for offering quality University education, concluded that Kenyan public universities do not have adequate capacity to do so, due to shortage of physical facilities for teaching and learning. In this regard, the authors warned that increased University admissions without expanding their resource bases would only contribute to further decline of quality. Similarly, Odhiambo (2011) explains that deteriorating physical facilities in Kenyan universities are part of the reasons behind the general decline in the competence of Kenyan University graduates over time. The author argues that the existing academic infrastructure in most universities can no longer cope with the number of learners, who are thus forced to attend lectures in over-crowded lecture halls that are not conducive to effective communication and learning.

7. Conclusion

The study therefore concludes that even though the Kenyan universities continue to demonstrate the will to offer quality teaching and learning in peace and security studies, the mood is fouled by inadequate teaching and learning facilities, leading to low student's perception of QTL in the universities. The study further concludes that lecturers are able to fully utilize the few available resources in delivering quality teaching and learning but the quality of the support personnel in charge of the facilities remains low. Similarly, the current state of student library, lecture halls, laboratories, workshops, internet access and convenience of the physical facilities is of concern to the students. Therefore, HE in peace and security studies as an education system remains characterized by entropy, a situation where the universities inject more energy on mass production of graduates but minimal resource investment in the teaching and learning process in order to sustain the programmes. This situation endangers student enrolment in the programmes and may lead to their eventual collapse.

8. Recommendations

There is therefore need for Kenyan universities to mobilize resources to improve the quality of their teaching and learning

resources, with particular emphasis on library books, support personnel, lecture halls, information communication technology and forensic laboratories. The universities also need to enhance the professionalism of the university support personnel in charge of the facilities in order to facilitate their maximum utilization.

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