



“...University is ISO 9000:2008 Certified”: Neoliberal Echoes, Knowledge Production and Quality Assurance in Kenyan State Universities

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Abstract

In Africa, Quality Assurance (QA) in universities has acquired a sense of urgency owing to the rapid growth of the university sector in the last two decades. The adoption of neoliberal tenets in the development of universities has witnessed the surge in student numbers and types of degree-granting institutions. The decline in budgetary support for higher education, evident in average per-student expenditure decline from US \$6,300 to \$1,500 by 1990, rising student enrolments coupled with inadequate and outdated teaching and learning resources, alongside massive staff exodus as well as poor governance have raised troubling questions about the quality of education provided. The rising concerns about the quality of the institutions and the graduates have catalyzed national educational authorities and individual institutions to institute quality assurance strategies in order to enhance the quality of education provide. This paper looks at how neoliberalism has undermined faculty validation of learning within the context of QA. Faculty exclusion in knowledge validation via QA is examined from the following themes: national accreditation, ISO certification, internal QA units, internships & attachments, and the deployment of information communication technologies. It is apparent that the development of universities along the neoliberal paradigm has eroded faculty prerogatives in QA as market ideals have triumphed over academic principles.

Résumé

En Afrique, l'Assurance qualité (AQ) dans les universités est empreinte d'un sentiment d'urgence en raison de la croissance rapide qu'a connu le milieu universitaire au cours des deux dernières décennies. L'adoption de principes néolibéraux dans le développement des universités a favorisé la hausse du nombre d'étudiants et des types d'établissements conférant des diplômes universitaires. Le déclin de l'appui budgétaire à l'enseignement

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supérieur, comme le prouve la baisse des dépenses moyennes par tête d'élève de 6300 dollars à 1500 dollars depuis 1990, la hausse des effectifs scolaires, couplée avec l'inadéquation et la désuétude des ressources d'enseignement et d'apprentissage, en marge de l'exode massif du personnel ainsi que la mauvaise gouvernance ont suscité de troublantes questions sur la qualité de l'enseignement dispensé. Les préoccupations croissantes au sujet de la qualité des institutions et des diplômés ont poussé les autorités de l'éducation nationale et les institutions individuelles à instituer des stratégies d'assurance qualité afin d'améliorer la qualité de l'offre de formation. Cet article examine la façon dont le néolibéralisme a sapé la validation de l'apprentissage par le corps professoral dans le contexte de l'AQ. L'exclusion des enseignants du processus de validation des connaissances par l'AQ est examinée à partir des thèmes suivants: accréditation nationale, certification ISO, les unités internes d'assurance qualité, stages et sessions de formation et le déploiement des technologies de communication et de l'information. Il est évident que le développement des universités parallèlement au paradigme néolibéral a entamé les prérogatives du corps professoral en matière d'AQ, d'autant que les visées mercantilistes l'ont emporté sur les principes académiques.

Introduction

Of the many challenges facing universities¹ in the era of marketization and globalization, the validation of knowledge generation and transmission through Quality Assurance (QA) mechanisms ranks in the top tier. Economic-utilitarian arguments espoused in favor of higher education expansion, especially in developing countries, contend that quality higher education is indispensable to economic growth, political development, technological catch up as well as increasing a society's competitiveness in a globalized environment (Bloom, 2004). This discourse on the utility of higher education in national development has been enunciated in policy documents justifying the state involvement in Africa's university sector. Not only are African universities expected to provide high level manpower for the growing public and private administrative institutions (Sifuna 2010), they are also expected to impart graduates with important competencies such as adaptability, teamwork, communication skills along with motivation for continual learning (Materu 2007). Ensuring that universities can rise to these challenges through their curricular programmes is the goal of the various QA mechanisms inherent in higher education.

In Africa, QA in universities has acquired a sense of urgency owing to the rapid growth of the university sector in the last two decades. The adoption of neoliberal tenets in the development of universities has witnessed the surge in student numbers and types of degree-granting institutions. The decline in budgetary support for higher education, evident in average per-student expenditure decline from US \$6,300 to \$1,500 by 1990 (Munene 2003), rising student enrolment coupled with inadequate and outdated teaching and learning resources, alongside massive staff exodus as well as poor governance has

raised troubling questions about the quality of education provided. The rising concerns about the quality of the institutions and the graduates have catalyzed national educational authorities and individual institutions to institute quality assurance strategies in order to enhance the quality of education provided.²

Kenya's QA challenges in higher education have their genesis in the privatization and marketization of university development, the product of neoliberal development policies of the last two decades. As Sifuna (2010) has noted, the massification of public universities has been accompanied by an equally dramatic decline in the quality of education epitomized by student over enrolment, teaching facility shortage, inadequate and dated library resources, insufficient and poorly trained staff and inefficient use of instructional time. Concerns about quality in the institutions have motivated the development of QA strategies in a bid to assuage public reservations about the relevance of the education provided. Due to the centrality of academic faculty in all matters related to the generation and transmission of knowledge, academic values of institutional autonomy and academic freedom dictate that they be actively engaged in the design, development and implementation of all QA mechanisms. However, in Kenya the unfolding university developments along the neoliberal paradigm have eroded faculty prerogatives in QA as market ideals have triumphed over academic principles.

This article looks at how neoliberalism has undermined faculty validation of learning within the context of QA. Quality Assurance here denotes all accountability tools employed, within and without the institution, to ensure educational quality along with the maintenance of core academic standards. Faculty exclusion in knowledge validation via QA is examined from the following themes: national accreditation, ISO certification, internal QA units, internships & attachments, and the deployment of information communication technologies. Though the focus is on all Kenya's public universities, the analysis will give preferential emphasis on the situation obtaining at Kenyatta University (KU) because it pioneered and has been the most prominent in the commercialization and marketization of its activities in tandem with the new dispensation³. It is, in a sense, the poster child of neoliberal transformation of state universities in Kenya today.

The Neoliberal Doctrine in Kenya's Higher Education

Neoliberalism, the delimiting of state role in development and accentuating market forces and private resources instead, was codified as the national development mantra in Kenya in the early 1990s when the government declared:

...the central thrust of the new policies is to rely on market forces to mobilize resources for growth and development with the role of central government increasingly confined to providing an effective regulatory framework and essential public infrastructure and social services. The government will limit direct participation in many sectors and instead promote private sector activity (Kiamba 2004:55).

This policy edict catalyzed waves of university transformations that have reshaped the character of public universities in Kenya – from wholly-owned public-financed institutions to public-owned largely privately-financed universities, fully informed by corporate management principles ([Munene and Otieno 2007](#)). Universities are now expected to generate their own resources and be self-reliant:

This is a turning point in the development of our public universities, where they are being called upon to adopt business-like financial management styles. It is also a point in time when universities have to plan well ahead about resources expected to be coming from sources other than the exchequer...Time has come to seriously take account of the universities potential to generate income internally...Income from such sources should be exploited and treated as definite sources of university revenue ([Kiamba 2004:55](#)).

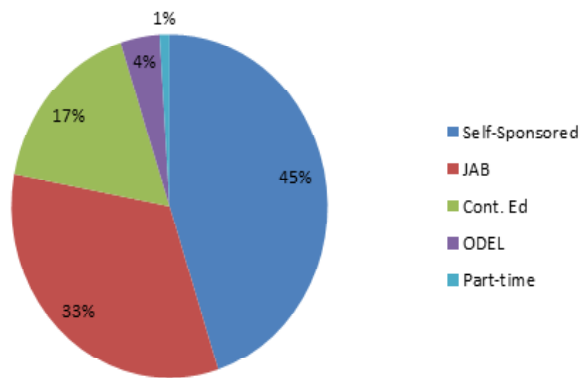
In concurrence with Zeleza's (2003) classification, Kenya's university reconfiguration in neoliberal terms has taken the trajectory of the six Cs: 1) corporatization of management (the adoption of business models for the organization and administration of the universities; 2) collectivization of access (growing massification of higher education in the various forms; 3) commercialization of learning (expansion of private programmes in public universities, expansion of private universities, and vocational training); 4) commodification of knowledge (increased production, sponsorship, and dissemination of research by commercial enterprises, applied research and intellectual property norms); 5) computerization of education (incorporation of information technologies into the knowledge activities of teaching, research and publication); and 6) connectivity of institutions (rising emphasis on institutional cooperation and coordination within and across countries. These changes are also prominent in various parts of Africa including South Africa (Ntshoe 2004) and Uganda (Mamdani 2007) among others.

As the poster boy of neoliberal university reconfiguration in Kenya, Kenyatta University's metamorphosis has been mercurial, saving the institution from pecuniary embarrassment. From its first strategic plan, its governance and management structures and its revenue-enhancing strategies, the drumbeats of the neoliberal order have been heard unequivocally. At the pinnacle of the university goals is to meet consumer and market needs ([Munene 2008](#)). Accordingly, its first strategic plan binds the university to the following aims:

- Establishment of operational efficiency in the realms of management of academic programmes in order to meet changing markets.
- Formulation and implementation of a system that would facilitate optimal utilisation of human, financial and physical and other resources in the university.
- Enhancement of innovative responses to shifting emphasis towards the development of a Kenyatta University brand.

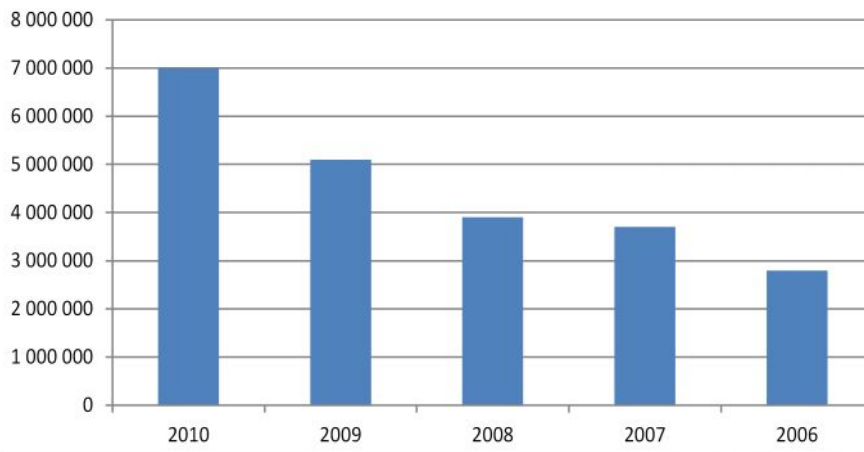
- Enhancement of a system, which will lead to a leaner and more efficient administrative framework (University 2004:3).

Figure 1: Enrolled Students per Mode of Study 2011 / 2012



Source: Kenyatta University, 2011, p. 6.

Figure 2: Growth of Total Income-5 Year Trend



Source: Kenyatta University, 2011, p. 8.

The growth in revenue and student enrolment are presented in Figures 1 and 2. It is evident that the revenue growth has been consistent and exponential. The bulk is generated from student tuition fees. The student enrolment data confirms this as the number of privately-sponsored students far supersedes the state-sponsored ones, catalyzed by new programmes in areas hitherto unavailable in public institutions. Different names are used to characterize these students including part-time, SSP (Self-Sponsored Students), continuing education, and ODEL (Online and Distance Education). The revenues have allowed the university to embark on a construction boom of unprecedented proportions. The university is in the midst of constructing a teaching hospital and toying with the idea of a technology park and a university city, a self-contained living community.

The neoliberal order in Kenya's universities typifies the extent to which the ideology has permeated into the entire fabric of society. Without hesitation since mid-1990s, Kenyans have been reminded, in all government documents and official pronouncements, that the market and private enterprise are the central pillars of development. For instance in Vision 2030, the Kenyan government roadmap to turning the country into an industrial nation, the role of the state in achieving the various lofty milestones is mute while the agency of the private sector and individual enterprise is trumpeted. "Governmentality", per Foucault (1983), are modes of actions employed by the state to steer citizens in specific directions, to structure the possible field of action for others. The rapid tolerance of neo-liberal ideology in the Kenyan psyche demonstrates this governmentality, much in the same fashion as in the US:

Under the rule of neoliberalism, politics are market driven and the claims of democratic citizenship are subordinated to market values. What becomes troubling under such circumstances is not simply that ideas associated with freedom and agency are defined through the prevailing ideology and principles of the market, but that neoliberalism wraps in what appears to be an unassailable appeal to common sense (Giroux 2002).

Yet, there is no denying that a full scale imposition of neoliberalism in academia devoid of critical reflection pivots the universities into treacherous territory. Any agenda that seeks to homogenize university operations akin to business traditions compromises academic freedom and faculty control in curriculum matters including the validation of knowledge. The business of generation, transmission and evaluation of knowledge bears little semblance in the operations of business enterprise as Elder so eloquently concludes:

Colleges and universities are organizations like corporations and, the thinking goes, if business improvement methods work for corporations, they should also work for higher education. After all, teaching and learning is a product, and like other products, it is sold to consumers. The problem, however, is that although education institutions are corporation-like entities, their primary activity is teaching and learning – which itself is not a business activity. The

education process can be defined in numerous ways, but however one defines it, teaching and learning does not inherently involve the activity of buying and selling (Elder 2004).

Elders assertion provides the segue for exploring the impact of neoliberalism on the quality assurance in Kenya's state universities in so far as faculty involvement is concerned.

Accreditation and the Politics of Private Control

The fulcrum of quality assurance in higher education has been accreditation, both institutional and programme based. The advantage of accreditation over other quality assurance protocols rests on its use of a wide array of parameters to make a determination of an institution's or programme's accountability to the various standards. Further, the accreditation process involves a whole gamut of stakeholders to whom the institution and programme are held accountable. So central is accreditation that governments have not only established national agencies to oversee the process but also dictated that financial aid is only available to students attending accredited institutions and enrolled in accredited programmes.

Institutional accreditation is the process through which educational institutions proclaim their visions and articulate their programme distinctiveness as agents in knowledge production, dissemination and utilization through programme design and delivery. Through accreditation, institutions rationalize how they select, validate and institutionalize knowledge to meet societal needs and "what norms, procedures and standards they embrace to regulate these processes" (Cross and Naidoo 2011:521). Programme accreditation, on the other hand, has its locus on improvement of programme quality and maintenance of standards of core activities. It responds to societal needs along with interests of regional and international scholars with interests in the discipline (Cross and Naidoo 2011). While accreditation has been a key feature of higher education in the west, it is only a recent development in Africa's higher education landscape. By 2007, only 16 African countries had fully functioning national accreditation agencies (Materu 2007:xv). Even in the relatively advanced South Africa, programme accreditation is still mired by the racial politics of the post-apartheid dispensation (Cross and Naidoo 2011).

In Kenya, the history and current process of accreditation mirrors the road most traveled by other African countries. To spearhead the expansion of the university sector, from the hitherto single public university to a robust mix of public and private sector, the Kenya government established in 1995 the Commission for Higher Education (CHE), now Commission for University Education (CUE) since 2013, to regulate university growth and ensure quality. For an institution to be accredited, CUE has to be satisfied that it meets basic standards of excellence authenticated in adequate physical, human, library and

financial resources.⁴ Currently 17 private universities have undergone the accreditation process and have been awarded charters permitting them to grant degrees. Another 11 have been granted Letters of Interim Authority (LIA) which allows them to offer degree programmes “while receiving guidance and direction from the Commission for Higher Education in order to prepare them for the award of Charter.”⁵ Until last year, public universities operated under institution-specific acts of parliament. They were not subject to the then CHE accreditation process and their existence and operation were rooted in legal statutes beyond the ambit of the commission.

The mandate of CUE encompasses the following: (a) Planning for establishment and development of higher education and training; (b) Mobilization of resources for higher education and training; (c) Accreditation and regular re-inspection of Universities, (d) Co-ordination and regulation of admission to Universities; and (e) Documentation, information services and public relations for higher education and training. The commission has a membership of 28 individuals with representatives from both public and private universities, all appointed by the Head of State. Since its inception, the Chief Executive Officer who also serves as the commission’s secretary has been a former vice-chancellor of a public university. From the mandate, which speaks to the accreditation of all universities, as well as the composition of the commission, one would expect that public universities would be subject to its quality assurance requirements. Yet, vice-chancellors of public universities had resisted for nearly 20 years any move to have their institutions accredited by the commission. They had also vehemently opposed the annulment of the various university statutes. The vice-chancellors were able to outfox the commission since the head of state is still the chancellor of all public universities as per their university statutes then. Even though the accreditation of public universities is now a reality, it appears to be a formality since all the institutions were accredited without any significant improvements in their programmes and facilities. The state university leaders have the political clout to access top echelon decision makers to forestall any move that would jeopardize their existence as state institutions.

Institutional accreditation in Kenya has, therefore, been reduced to control of private growth just as it is in a number of African countries. The goal has been to limit, if not outlaw altogether, the mushrooming of low quality demand-absorbing tuition-dependent institutions. Neoliberalism envisions the role of the state as being regulatory, providing a policy environment for private capital to participate in service delivery. This private-growth control goal satisfies this neoliberal doctrine since it provides a predictable regulatory climate for private investors who now have a legal foundation for their investments in university education. For Kenyans enrolled in private universities, there are assurances that the product meets acceptable thresholds; haphazard and uncoordinated growth by profiteers would compromise this controlled growth.

Without being subjected to rigorous accreditation, public universities have been able to launch a plethora of programmes and income-generating activities which would not be permissible by CUE in private universities. Programmes like disaster management, hotel and tourism management, military studies, and revenue centres like funeral homes, manufacturing units and hotels, most which have minimal bearing on academic programming have found abode in public universities. With decreased state subventions, it seems that the "easy" accreditation of public institutions is meant to ensure an entrepreneurial culture evolves and percolates into the universities.

The downside of this mode of accreditation is that it robs the state universities' faculty input in quality assurance. In a traditional institutional accreditation, faculty input is captured through institutional self-study, programme reviews and conferences with the external reviewers. Without incentives to re-assess what the faculty is doing in terms of meeting labour market needs, new thinking in the disciplines, and the adequacy of resources, programmes remain stale and dated. The content of secondary teacher training courses in public universities, for instance, has not changed for more than 30 years. Furthermore, faculty have no say on which income generating activities the institutions should venture into and how these entrepreneurial activities would inform teaching, research and service. Decisions around these activities are made through administrative fiats by the senior management who are regarded as custodians of the institutional quality.

In sum, accreditation in Kenya is guided by neoliberal tenets of promoting and safeguarding private growth, coupled with engendering commercialization and efficient managerialism in state universities. The purported "no accreditation role" in public university is, to the contrary, a powerful statement allowing them to experiment with numerous programmes and activities geared towards revenue enhancement. In the process, faculty input in quality assurance is relegated to the margins.

ISO Certification and the Triumph of Markets

The lethal mix of surge in student enrolment, commercialization of learning, declining state funding and institutional non-accreditation have fueled fears, and rightly so, that the quality of education in state universities has been irreparably compromised. To inoculate themselves against charges of quality compromise and to give a semblance of external quality control, universities have sought and obtained the International Standards Organization's ISO 9000:2000 certification. First adopted by Kenyatta University in 2008, ISO 9000:2000 certification has now become a quality assurance memento for both private and public universities. University stationery, advertising literature and official documents are now emblazed with the "...University is ISO 9000:2000 certified" signature.

The use of the ISO certification as a signature of academic quality raises important questions. Why would premier state universities with a history of academic excellence suddenly seek foreign industrial accreditation? Further, why would a premier private university which has national accreditation seek an additional foreign certification? Additionally, what are the implications of ISO certification for faculty input in institutional governance as it relates to academic quality? A dichotomy in perspectives is evident. Administrators see the move as a marketing strategy, the consequence of the increasing competition for students between universities. Faculty views it as another assault on their authority over academic matters.

Maintained by the International Organization of Standardization, ISO 9000 and its assemblage of family standards have their roots in business and industry. They were founded to ensure uniformity of manufactured products, reduction of defects, and product standardization along with quality management to ensure customer satisfaction. If these were achieved, then cost reduction and profitability would be assured (Pun and Chin 1999). Modern universities, in contrast, had their genesis in cathedral and monastic schools in medieval Europe where knowledge refinement and transmission were the prime objectives. Academic quality in such knowledge production and transmission centres cannot be measured using the same parameters found in industrial production centres. Output products in both centres are inherently different. These contrasting roots cast aspersions on the wisdom of applying business standards to academic institutions.

Academic knowledge is generated and thrives in a non-linear fashion; in most cases, it thrives in a non-rational method in which time and space may be contrary to conventional wisdom. We are all familiar with illustrious scholarship in which great discoveries and writings occurred beyond the confines of a regulated academic environment. By blindly adopting ISO 9000:2000 standards, Kenya university administrators are succumbing to the faulty logic, promoted by business and industry, that non-rational systems are less efficient or even inefficient. A cursory examination of distinguished universities across the globe proves otherwise. Universities that have promoted a differentiated and divergent approach to scholarship are the world leaders in knowledge production and dissemination today.

An efficient management system as the one espoused by ISO 9000:2000 is inimical to academic governance with its emphasis on collegiality among the faculty. For product standardization and efficiency, management structures in business and industry are characterized by a top-down hierarchical governance model. Euphemisms such as Total Quality Management (TQM), Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) and Self-assessed Quality Management System (SQMS) are a convenient cover for this disempowering management structure.

Universities, in order to promote knowledge generation, are generally characterized by a decentralized collegial governance model comprising numerous committees and offices. Top administrators are first and foremost teachers in order to emphasize this collegiality.

Audit for ISO 9000:2000 certification is equally problematic. In Kenya, this is undertaken by SGS Kenya with the assistance of Kenya Bureau of Standards (KeBS). These organizations are well known for their work in inspection, verification, testing and certification of goods and services provided by businesses and social institutions. Faculty at both Kenyatta and Nairobi universities faulted these agencies foray into Kenyan university certification business on a number of fronts, including lack of peer-equivalency as research or academic institutions. Being outside the knowledge production industry and wanting in professionals with that background, it is doubtful that they would have the necessary skills, knowledge and competency to provide appropriate university certification. It was noted that inspectors from both agencies are first degree holders and only in very rare cases did they possess a master's degree.

The peer-equivalence deficit has also been compounded by the absence of internal self-study in the ISO certification process. Academic units are hardly required to undertake a self-assessment of their strengths and weaknesses vis-à-vis the institutions' strategic plans and missions. All that is required of faculty are teaching demonstrations. It is this perfunctory faculty role that has contributed to feelings of disempowerment in academic decision making.

If non-accreditation and ISO certification result in better governance, then the recent student riots at Nairobi and Kenyatta universities suggest otherwise. Less than a year after the ISO certification, the universities had to confront the perennial ghost of learning disruption as students took to the streets in violent and deadly demonstrations. The March 2009 riots at Kenyatta University were the most destructive in the history of the country's higher education. Over Ksh. 200 Million (US \$2.6 Million) in university property damage, 2 student deaths and over 50 incarcerated as a result of student rampage over the administration's intransigence over a flexible fee-payment plan the students had proposed (Munene 2013). These incidents are hardly the stuff internationally-vaunted management practices are made of. Old managerial habits die hard.

It bears noting that the vice-chancellor (president) of the University of Nairobi betrayed the neoliberal agenda in ISO certification when he asserted that "part of the reform programme... a Quality Management System that would ensure the institution meets customer requirements as well as statutory and regulatory needs pertinent to University services". Students no longer view the university as a learning community but rather as customers who vote with their bottom line. The universities processes, programmes and outcomes are to be measured by customer satisfaction rather than pedagogical needs and

appropriateness as determined by the teaching fraternity. This is yet another evidence of the faculty disempowerment in curricular matters on the altar of student-customer satisfaction.

Internal Quality Assurance Units and the Neoliberal Agenda

Without a modicum of internal quality assurance mechanisms in place, no external quality assurance agency is sufficient to eliminate some measure of cynicism about the quality of an institution's academic programmes. External constituencies need assurances that the university is cognizant of its responsibility to mount programmes that are relevant, current and delivered competently as determined by the academic staff. The internal communities need a structure that ensures they participate in making determinations as to the quality of the programmes offered. Many universities have established internal quality assurance units to coordinate the various activities that comprise internal quality assurance. Among the plethora of internal quality assurance tools in use are external examiners, self-evaluation and academic audits. Of these, self-evaluation is at the top in terms of faculty involvement and empowerment in curricular matters as it provides space for internal critique of programmes, opportunities for identification of strength and weaknesses, and means of identifying key performance indicators.

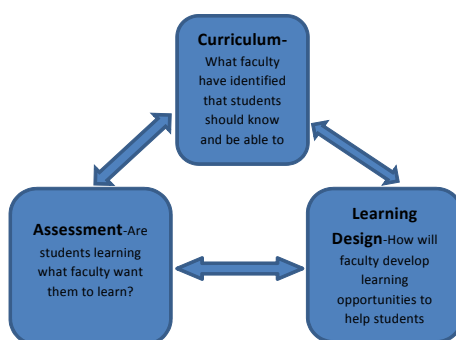
Kenyan universities have recognized the need and importance of internal quality assurance in academic programming as a means of ensuring accountability as nearly all universities have established directorates dedicated to quality assurance. At Kenyatta University, the Centre for Quality Assurance was founded in 2003 "...to assist the University in achieving its mission of providing quality education and training, promote scholarship, service, innovation and creativity and inculcate moral values for sustainable individual and societal development."⁶ The mandate of the centre encompasses the following:

- Coordinate the Student-Lecturer Evaluation exercise.
- Synthesize, analyze and submit a report to management for necessary action on departmental external examiners reports
- Initiate departmental market surveys to determine market needs and relevance of our academic programmes.
- Liaise with departments to monitor course reviews to ensure relevance as informed by the market surveys.
- Maintain a tracking system of departmental cyclic course reviews (at least once every four years) and provide periodic reports on status.
- Recommend to management departmental programmes due for review.
- Recommend the development or de-establishment of programmes based on the findings of the market surveys.

In three important ways, these goals highlight the preponderance of neoliberal thinking in quality assessment. First is the emphasis on utilitarian-market function of academic programmes. The centre initiates "departmental market surveys to determine market needs and relevance of our academic programmes", recommends "the development or de-establishment of programmes based on the findings of the market surveys" and coordinates "with other departments to monitor course reviews to ensure relevance as informed by the market surveys". Simply put, academic programme survive or fall depending on economic potential; cognitive and socio-political significance of academic programmes are subordinated to the dictates of the marketplace.

Second, a subtext in the goals is the heightened managerialism that informs the process of programme review. In both the preview and post-review stages, considerable focus is on the university management, consisting of the vice-chancellor and the cabinet, as the recipient of feedback rather than faculty or students. The centre synthesizes reports "to management for necessary action on departmental external examiners reports" and advises "management departmental programmes due for review." The evaluation tools used by students in the evaluation of instruction are also designed and administered by administrators. Results of student evaluations of faculty are used as personnel action items when necessary to reprimand or discipline an instructor over such mundane issues like punctuality. Missing in both the design of evaluation protocols and the use of the evaluation results is the role of faculty. Faculty play no significant role in determining the quality of academic programmes mounted and the quality of instruction by their peers. Nor do they play any significant role in mentoring their colleagues on instructional strategies based on student evaluation.

The consequences of internal quality assurance mechanisms as currently conceived is to disempower faculty in their legitimate role of assessing programme and instructional quality. Indeed, the evaluation of instructional quality requires a grassroots collaborative endeavor involving students, faculty and the academic unit head as laid out in Figure 3 and Table 1. Each has a distinct role to play which ensures that critical stakeholders in the instruction process are represented in the determination of quality. However, neoliberal tenets that have magnified the importance of the market have changed the discourse of programme and instructional assessments in Kenya's state universities from that of continuous improvement in content development and instructional design to one of congruence with labour market requirements. The overarching concerns have been with faculty compliance with management dictates regarding the knowledge to be created and delivered, and less about pedagogical strategies and student learning outcomes.

Figure 3: Model for Relationship between Curriculum, Learning Design**Table 1:** Scheme for Collaborative Teaching Evaluation

Criteria	Sub-criteria	Evaluator			
		A. Faculty member:	B. Students:	C. Peers:	D. Chair/Director:
1. Content of Expertise	<i>Analysis of Content Expertise</i>	Reflects on Content Expertise	N/A	Review course materials	Reviews Course Materials
	<i>Perceptions of Instructor's Content Expertise</i>	Team teaching, Peer assessment, teaching scholarship	Evaluate instructor via questionnaire	N/A	N/A
2. Instructional Delivery	<i>Effectiveness of Delivery</i>	Describes philosophy & methods Video self-assessment	Evaluate instructor via questionnaire	Review videotaped instruction	N/A
	<i>Student Success</i>	Describe efforts to ensure student success	Evaluate instructor via questionnaire	Review failure rates and explanation	Reviews failure rates and explanation
3. Instructional Design Skill	<i>Analysis of Instructional Design</i>	Describes philosophy and approach	N/A	Review course materials	Reviews course materials
	<i>Perceptions about Course Design</i>	Describes course objectives, measures for attaining & outcomes	Evaluate instructor via questionnaire	N/A	N/A
4. Course Management		Describes philosophy & Methods	Evaluate instructor via questionnaire	Review course materials	Reviews course administration, materials & student feedback

Source: Adapter from Felder and Brent (2004) and Arreol (2000).

Just-in-Time Training – Internships and Career Training

Professional education programmes in universities are deemed incomplete if students are not exposed to the practical minutiae of professions in real life settings. To be certified in education, medicine, pharmacy, and engineering among others, students are to invest time in the field gaining practical experience while working under experienced professionals. The time spent depends on programme and ranges from 3 months to one year. A myriad of nomenclature characterize these practical experiences including attachment, practicum, internship, and partnerships reflecting the diversity of experiences students are exposed to. In the neoliberal era practical application of knowledge is absolutely necessary. The analysis that follows is dedicated to partnerships and internships in the scientific/engineering and business realms which are the most prominent in Kenya's state universities. The training of teachers is excluded since it has always been a component in the teacher education programme and the neoliberal impact has been minimal at best.

University-industry partnerships have been instrumental in strengthening the neoliberal climate in Kenyan state universities. Kenyatta University has established the Directorate of University-Industry Partnerships in order to harness valuable resources from the private sector as a vehicle to enhance its revenue base along with strengthening academic programming. The directorate is tasked with "strengthening the partnerships between the University and private sector both locally and internationally, coordinating goodwill activities between the University and industry, seeking motivation awards from the corporate sector as well as generation and incubation of business ideas from research, technology and innovation".⁷ Besides establishing a business incubation centre, the Chandaria Business Innovation and Incubation Centre (C-BIIC), sponsored by a leading industrialist, Manu Chandaria, the directorate also supports the following activities:

- 1) **Student Work Induction Programme (SWIP)** – where students from various disciplines are placed in participating organizations to acquire practical work experience. They work under a performance contract and salary; and
- 2) **Student Motivation Awards Programme (SMAs)** – Outstanding students from various disciplines academic disciplines are rewarded for their performance.

This model of partnership and internship epitomizes the rhetoric of neoliberalism from a variety of vantage points. First, the establishment of the incubation centre is billed as a global trend at "world class universities"⁸ signifying that global competitiveness supersedes local engagement and relevance determining the quality of academic programming. As universities seek to position themselves in

global rankings (Bowman and Michael 2011; Salmi 2011), the discourse on “world class” university as a measure of quality has become pervasive in universities in developing countries, Kenya included. Second, the “distinguished mentors” at the centre, those to inspire, motivate and provide lessons on entrepreneurship are “...renowned Kenyan entrepreneurial icons; some of whom are leading industrialists in the region; others are CEOs of public and private corporations.”⁹

This narrative suggests that the quality of the output is determined not by the quality of university faculty input in nurturing the budding entrepreneurs but by the sole input of successful industrialists, businesspeople and corporate executives. Third, students assigned industry internships are subjected to performance contract and payment of salary by the hiring agency suggesting that the employers’ evaluations of learning outcomes eclipses that of lecturers at the university. So, industry has become the sole determinant of field experience learning outcomes.

In all the partnerships and internships in Kenya, the university faculty involved plays a very minimal role in assessing and determining the quality of student learning. Any role is limited to visiting students at their workplace to verify that they regularly show up. The partnership and internships are in essence structured in a hierarchical paradigm that privileges a new academic order inimical to the old tradition of the academy. The decisions of university management and industry chiefs on what constitutes quality knowledge to be obtained by the students – practical knowledge as executed in a corporate/industrial setting – is perceived to be superior to cognitive and pedagogical decisions made collegially by the faculty in the universities. Furthermore, there is a hidden narrative that elevates module 2 knowledge – applied knowledge that can be quantified, commoditized and marketized – while at the same time denigrating basic knowledge – foundational knowledge that cannot be measured nor commoditized. Yet it is the building block of all forms of knowledge. The disempowering nature of this arrangement for academics at the university cannot be over emphasized.

Given the tendency of neoliberal universities to concentrate power in the managerial class, it is hardly surprising that in Kenyan universities, partnerships and attachments have relegated the power of academics in assessing the quality of student learning outside the institutions to the backwaters of commerce and industry. The asymmetrical power relation in these contractual arrangements is captured in the following warning by Cardini:

Although theoretical definitions present partnerships as a cluster of symmetrical and complementary sector partners, in practice partnerships tend to show asymmetrical and unbalanced relationships between different members....and....although the theoretical concept of partnership is directly linked to the idea of social and community participation, in practice partnerships seem to be the instrument to implement top down central policies (Cardini 2006).

To ameliorate these challenges of power along with quality assessment, Bloomfield advocates a collaborative engagement that recognizes the interests of all critical stakeholders including faculty as "...addressing issues within relationships of instability, contradiction and power differentials is a necessary step for moving beyond simplistic generalizations and optimistic advocacy of 'partnerships'...." (Bloomfield 2008:10).

Totally Wired: Webometrics and the Illusion of ICT Prowess

We are pleased to inform Kenyatta University fraternity that ranking on webometrics has improved significantly. We have maintained our national ranking at position 3 from 5 in 2009. Our continental ranking has improved from position 100 in 2009 to 45 in 2012 and from position 9129 in 2009 to 3034 in 2012 globally....We wish to thank Kenyatta University management for the guidance, encouragement and support that has made the website come this far. We also wish to congratulate all schools, departments and directorates/centres for having been part of this initiative of good performance by providing timely information to be uploaded to the website.¹⁰

The above congratulatory message to the Kenyatta University fraternity serves as a stark reminder of the dominance that information technologies have played in the transformation of higher education. At the forefront of managerialism, efficiency, and globalization, important canons of neoliberalism in higher education, are information communication technologies (ICT) that have grown exponentially in the last two decades. As universities have become more entrepreneurial, academic capitalism (Slaughter and Larry 1997) has become the guiding value in institutional process and outcomes. The use of sophisticated information technologies has permitted universities to standardize and routinize work activities, manage and evaluate faculty work, undertake product innovation and marketing, all geared towards enhancing their global competitiveness in the marketplace. The ability to effectively leverage ICT resources is, therefore, regarded as a good indicator of institutional quality in the neoliberal dispensation.

The obsession with webometrics,¹¹ a ranking system that merely evaluates universities based on their web presence, is another manifestation of concern with global competitiveness at the expense of local relevance and engagement first encountered in the section on ISO certification. It disempowers the academic faculty in determining the quality of instruction as it is merely concerned with web presence rather than effectiveness of academic instruction, student engagement and faculty peer collaboration. In more significant ways, the Kenyatta University website itself is an epitome of administrative centrism infused with contradictions and inaccuracies. Rather than individual faculty members and departments controlling and managing content about their units on the World Wide Web, the development and updating of the website is handled centrally at the "university website office" – a nondescript unit staffed by

techies. Due to the absence of grassroots initiative in the website development, it is not surprising that the content remains out of date and contradictory – on the one hand the newsletter will declare a faculty member as deceased but the departmental website will list the member as active in teaching and research. There are few incentives for departments and academics to update their profile. Furthermore the university website lacks interactivity – hardly can any business be conducted online other than downloading of application forms and newsletters.

Evidently, the Webometrics quality assessment does not disclose that technology access along with internet connectivity for faculty is still wanting at Kenyatta University. Faculty members do not have computers in their offices and nearly all teaching and learning support activities are still manual. Only departmental chairs and offices are provided with a computer; teaching staff are expected to purchase their own using a loan agreement negotiated by the university and a local financial institution. Put differently, the teaching faculty have not been central to technology integration at the institution.

The emerging picture is that ICT at Kenyatta University is merely a tool for management to market the institution rather than an instrument for enhancing university operations in support of teaching and learning. Technology planners have long recognized that implementation of ICT should be informed by the institution's intellectual assets – the faculty. Technology should mediate the social contact between the faculty, students and the university; “the challenge is not simply to open the eyes of participating faculty to new technologies and methodologies; faculty must be mobilized to redefine their profession in a rapidly changing world” (Slaughter and Larry 1997). Apparently this is the target that Kenyatta University, as a microcosm of the status in Kenya's state university, has missed.

Concluding Remarks

Undoubtedly, neoliberalism has been the most potent force in the transformation of Kenya's higher education landscape. In terms of system configurations, institutional operations as well as modalities of knowledge generation, neoliberalism has redefined the entire fabric of university education in the country. Public universities are now defined by massification, commercialization of learning, commodification of knowledge and corporatization of governance (managerialism) all which have raised apprehensions about the nature of knowledge generation and transmission. Issues of quality assurance have taken centre stage in contemporary narratives of higher education development in recent years.

This chapter has explored the impact of neoliberalism on quality assurance mechanism employed by public universities in Kenya to assess the quality of teaching and learning. Specifically, we used the experience of Kenyatta University as a microcosm of a public university to interrogate the

disempowerment of academics in the determination of quality in knowledge production and transmission. The absence of national accreditation for state universities denies faculty in state universities opportunities for self-study – a critical component of evaluation that relies of peer institutions and colleagues assessing each other's programmes and resources. This absence could also be suggestive of the state's tacit support for the universities to embark on the commercialization and marketization activities as means of enhancing revenue generation. In an effort to assuage concerns over quality the state universities have sought industry-based quality assurance standard, the ISO 9000:2000 certification. This industry-based certification eschews faculty input in quality assurance and places premium on university structural processes and operations rather than knowledge generation and transmission.

Internal quality assurance audits that universities have instituted are also skewed against faculty input. Emphasis is placed on the utilitarian-market function of university education and the supremacy of the university management in the designing of evaluation tools as well as in the use of the evaluation outcomes. Course evaluations results are used by management to discipline academics rather than as tools for improvement of teaching and learning. The ascendancy of the market-management duopoly is also manifest in attachments and internships where industry captains and university management determine the quality of the type of knowledge that students ought to obtain while on the practical training. The emphasis is largely on practical dispositions – applied knowledge. It is an arrangement that minimizes the input of faculty and basic/fundamental knowledge that is so central to university education. The universities managements' celebratory accolade that has accompanied the implementation of information technologies in the universities is a case of dancing lame before the main dance. An improved Webometrics ranking, which measures an institutions web presence, is frequently cited as a measure of quality education. However, this belies the fact that technology integration into the fabric of university teaching and learning remains a constant dream. Needless to state, departments and faculty remain powerless in the development and management of university content on the World Wide Web.

It goes without saying that there is still a long way to go in empowering faculty to take control of quality assurance in knowledge generation and transmission in Kenya's state universities. The concerns with revenue generation and linking universities to industry has blindsided university administrations to the critical role that an empowered faculty can play in determining the quality of a university's research, teaching and learning missions. Only a comprehensive reform strategy that puts the faculty at the centre of university transformation will ensure that the cardinal mission of the universities with regard to knowledge generation and transmission are not sacrificed at the altar of commercialism.

Notes

1. In this chapter higher education and university, despite different meanings in different contexts, are used interchangeably to refer to any degree-granting institution.
2. Quality Assurance guidelines have been established by the Association for African Universities (AAU) <http://aau.org/?q=qa> the Inter-University Council for East Africa (IUCEA) http://www.iucea.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=106&Itemid=66 and the South African University Vice-Chancellors' Association (SAUVCA) 2003.
3. For a discussion on Kenyatta University's commercialization and marketization activities see Munene, 2008.
4. See CUE website at <http://www.cue.or.ke/services/accreditation/status-of-universities> (Accessed October 10, 2014).
5. CUE website <http://www.cue.or.ke/services/accreditation/status-of-universities> (Accessed October 10, 2014).
6. See Kenyatta University Center for Quality Assurance site: <http://www.ku.ac.ke/index.php/about-ku/administration/directorates/quality-assurance> (Accessed April 3, 2012).
7. See Kenyatta University Directorate of University-Industry Partnerships site: <http://www.ku.ac.ke/index.php/centres-a-directorates/330-university-industry-links>(Accessed April 9, 2012).
8. Ibid.(Accessed April 13, 2012).
9. See C-BIIC brochure at: http://www.ku.ac.ke/c-biic/images/stories/docs/C_BIIC_Bronchure_2011.pdf
10. Kenyatta University Newsletter: A Fortnightly Publication of the Office of the Vice-Chancellor p. 10: http://www.ku.ac.ke/images/stories/docs/newsletters/vol_8_issue_%202.pdf (Accessed April 23, 2012).
11. See Webometrics website for additional information at: <http://www.webometrics.info/> (Accessed April 24, 2012).

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