

STUDENT AND STAFF PERCEPTION ON THE GROWTH AND ADMINISTRATION OF PARALLEL DEGREE PROGRAMMES IN KENYA

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ABSTRACT: *The introduction of parallel degree programmes into public universities in Kenya initially triggered off stiff resistance from regular students as well as education experts who argued that quality would be sacrificed in pursuit of additional funds by the universities to address their deficit. Public universities shifted from the public-good paradigm to a market model in which generation of funds for the survival of the institution takes center stage. This paper examines the growth of Privately Sponsored Student Programmes (PSSP) in Kenya and the perception of staff and students on its management by the institutions. The descriptive study adopted ex-post facto research design. A sample of 460 privately sponsored students from all schools and campuses of Moi University and 140 teaching and non-teaching staff was used. Stratified random sampling procedure was used to identify the schools and the students while purposive sampling was used on the staff. Data was collected using questionnaires for students and staff while interview guides were used on administrators of schools and satellite campuses. The PSSP students at Moi University feel the University is not providing the quality education they had hoped to get. The staff has a more positive attitude towards PSSP and asserts that they are willing to put in more effort to ensure that PSSP achieves its objectives. However, the students think that there is little chance of any of them getting first class honours degree because of inadequate teaching, shortage of supporting infrastructure and favouritism.*

KEYWORDS: Perception, PSSP Administration, Parallel Programmes, Growth.

LITERATURE REVIEW

African countries inherited systems of higher education from their colonial masters at independence and continued thereafter with a structure of one powerful university at the top catering for a relatively small, privileged number of students whose tuition and accommodation were fully paid for by the state (Ngolovai, 2006). Access was based on examination performance, admission related to the requirements of the civil services, and the overwhelming youthful male student body pursued full-time degree courses within a rigid term structure, with progress measured and achievement conferred by annual and all-determining examinations. The management of this model university was centralized and hierarchical, academic quality was high and resources for research and learning abundant (Coleman & Court, 1993). The students contributed little by way of service and had their study and leisure supported by support staff more numerous than the academic staff. Universities, except in South Africa, had no tradition of fees or student loans.

The history of the parallel degree programmes

In the past, the government of Kenya financed the development and operations of Higher Education (HE) because it is seen as a global public good and it is only right that the state bare the biggest burden for payment of operating costs of the universities (CHE, 2003). Due to

public demand and human capital theory, HE has undergone considerable expansion and as of 2010, there were a total of thirty (30) public and private universities serving a student population of 200,000 in Kenya. The enrolment rose from 571 students in 1963 to 91,541 students in 2006 and almost 90% are in public universities (UNESCO, 2006). Simiyu (2004) observes that this trend is due to several factors, including demographic growth, significant advances in the provision of primary and secondary education hence, more young people become eligible to seek admission in HE, and also the individual realization that HE is a key instrument not only for securing future economic development but also for social, cultural and political functioning in a rapidly changing society in use of knowledge and technology.

University education in Kenya has recorded phenomenal growth in the past two decades. First, the expansion of public universities to admit increased numbers of school leavers, followed by the parallel degree courses for those who missed out due to the high cut-off points criteria largely driven by availability of bed space. In the last two decades, universities have mushroomed and, though this was initially controlled by stringent accreditation rules by CHE, things have since changed and the growth is almost uncontrollable and does not match the resource provisions (CHE, 2003). This has also affected the student to lecturer ratio which has gone down significantly implying that the quality of lecturer interaction with students has been negatively affected.

Duplication of courses and cut-throat competition between the universities has become a factor worth noting in the growth and expansion of higher education. Moi University, for example, established in 1984 was to specialize in science and technology courses, but along the way began to enroll students for education and arts-based courses (Kilumba, 2001). This was in response to the demand for these courses from the market. The African Association of Universities also notes political interference, poor quality of students on admission and paucity of contemporary programmes and the challenges of governance and poor leadership in the universities (Mutula, 2002) as other critical issues that Kenyan public universities are coping with.

Introduction of parallel degree programmes in Kenya

According to Maina (1989), there has been a sharp decrease in the proportion of the Kenya national budget for recurrent expenditure that is being allocated for higher education. In 1988/89, education received 38% of the total recurrent budget funds (Maina, 1989). In 1992/93, estimated recurrent government expenditures for education were only 18% of the total national recurrent budget (Republic of Kenya, 1993). The international agencies, most notably, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, have been the staunch advocates of “structural adjustment” policies. These policies require that national budgets be structured in such a way that the broad spectrum of national development needs is addressed.

The public universities in Kenya have continued to be underfunded by the Government, a trend which has persisted over time. Consequently, the cost of staff, learning and research materials, catering and accommodation services, coupled with inflationary pressures has made it difficult to sustain the operations of these universities. The implication of such a scenario has been that the increasing debt burden threatens to compromise the very essence of the objects and functions of the universities. The Government, indeed, made it quite clear that it would no longer be able to fully finance public universities. A notable observation in the Kenyan 1994-98 Development Plan was that the central thrust of the new policies is to rely on market forces to mobilize resources for growth and development with the role of the Government being

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 public private sector partnerships to enable such institutions to engage the private sector in infrastructural developments with the government's role being that of a guarantor (Kiamba, 2003).

The privately sponsored students' programmes at Moi University

Moi University was established in 1984 by an Act of Parliament (Moi University Act, 1984) as the second public university in Kenya. The university was initially intended to be a University of Science and Technology and development but later it began to offer degree programmes in the social sciences (Moi University Strategic Plan, 2005- 2015). After inauguration, the first group of 83 students all finalists at the Department of Forestry from University of Nairobi, joined Moi University in October 1984 and so the Faculty of Forestry and Natural Resource Management became the first faculty of the newly chartered Second Public University in Kenya.

Since then, the University has experienced phenomenal growth from its initial one faculty in 1984 to a total of 8 faculties, 4 schools and 2 institutes in 2004. By (2009/10) the university had 13 schools, four directorates, one institute, eight satellite campuses at Kitale, Alupe, Yala, Kericho, Nairobi, Mombasa and Garissa and five constituent colleges, namely Narok, Kabianga, Karatina, Rongo and Chepkoilel. The total number of students enrolled was 21,000 in 2008/2009 and 23,000 in 2009/2010 academic year out of whom 13,354 were privately sponsored students. The students are registered in 121 programmes consisting of 40 undergraduate, 53 Masters of Philosophy, 23 Doctor of Philosophy and 5 postgraduate diploma programmes and the number was expected to rise to 30,000 by 2014/2015.

Other than PSSP, the University has other income-generating activities such as bookshop services, Moi University Press, Rivatex Factory, the Farm, Innovations Firm and Open and Distance Learning. In its strategic policy direction, the University states that it intends to increase its expenditure on its core activities of teaching, research and community services while reducing its expenditure on the non-core activities (Moi University Strategic Plan, 2005-2015).

Resistance to the new programmes

Earlier on, there was some resistance to the introduction of the new parallel programmes in public universities, especially by students of the University of Nairobi who were enrolled in the regular degree programmes and heavily subsidized through government funding. The University had to be closed for a month following demonstrations against the introduction of the new programmes. Time and again efforts to reform universities' funding system have often resulted in student unrest. Even selective attempts to impose fees on those who can afford them had been fiercely resisted. Notwithstanding the challenges, a strong case has been made in favour of charging tuition fees by pointing out that poor taxpayers should not have to subsidize the education of the affluent and can afford to pay the total cost for their children (Muvunyi, 2006).

It is important to realize that by the time parallel programmes were started in the late 1990s, the concept of cost-sharing and student loans was already an accepted reality in public universities, having been instituted during the 1980s. To some extent, therefore, the parallel

programmes seemed a logical route of the large continuum of strategies of the financing of university education. This obviously played some role in the acceptability of the new programmes by the University community and other stakeholders. The utilization of the funds generated from new academic programmes at first was visible through projects; especially Government initiated capital/development projects in the University that had stalled for many years. More so an element of fairness in the benefits-sharing by most stakeholders was important in enhancing the acceptability of the new programmes (Kiamba, 2002). The parallel degree programmes opened access to students previously unable to obtain university at public universities. The increased funding enabled the public universities to attract and retain teaching staff using the enhanced incomes as an incentive.

Materials and Methods

The study was carried out at the Moi University located in Eldoret and in six of its satellite campuses, namely Chepkoilel Campus, Kericho Campus, Coast Campus, Nairobi Campus, Central Kenya Campus, Yala and Southern Nyanza Campus – Rongo. The university has been at the forefront in creating constituent colleges some of which have become fully fledged public universities such as Maseno, Masinde Muliro, Masaai Mara and University of Eldoret.

This study used the *ex post facto* design to investigate the perception of staff and students on the expansion of the privately sponsored students programme. The study embraced a mixed methods approach where both qualitative and quantitative approaches were used to gather data. Questionnaires and interview schedules were used for data collection. The target population for the study was all the PSSP students (11,185) enrolled in the academic year 2009/2010 in all the schools that have parallel programmes ongoing. Staff; teaching and non-teaching were also incorporated as well as deans of participating schools, heads of departments and administrators of satellite campuses who handle PSSP programmes. The schools were selected through simple random sampling. A total of one hundred and forty (140) teaching and non-teaching staff members were interviewed while 460 students responded to questionnaires. However responses from 415 individuals were analyzed. The data collected was coded and tabulated before using statistical package of social sciences (SPSS) for data analysis. Descriptive statistics such as means, standard deviations and frequencies were used in the analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Nature of PSSP students and staff involved at Moi University

The author sought the general information about the respondents that included characteristics such as gender, year of the study of the students and occupation for the staff as shown in table 1.

Table 1: St

Student's Demographic Data

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Gender	Male	254	61.2	61.2	61.2
	Female	161	38.8	38.8	100
	Total	415	100	100	
Year of Study	First	25	6	6	6
	Second	86	20.7	20.7	26.7
	Third	111	26.7	26.7	53.5
	Fourth	193	46.6	46.6	100
	Total	415	100	100	
Mean scores	B	138	33.3	33.3	33.3
	B-	164	39.5	39.5	72.8
	B+	35	8.4	8.4	81.2
	C+	78	18.8	18.8	100
	Total	415	100	100	

Source: Survey Data, 2012

From the above table, 164 (39.5%) of the PSSP students got B- in their KCSE examinations, suggesting that many PSSP students were averagely qualified to join university as PSSP students, since most Kenyan universities enroll students who have attained grade C+ for a PSSP undergraduate admission. In addition, 138 (33.3%) of the PSSP students had grade B in their KCSE exams

All the 415 respondents in the study were found to have attained the grade C+ and above which supports the university's policy of admitting students who meet the minimum entry requirements of C+.

Expansion of PSSP programmes in Moi University

The PSSP programmes were introduced into Moi University in October 1998 for purposes of increasing opportunities for university education to Kenyans who have previously had no access to post secondary education because of limited space in the existing public universities.. PSSP programmes are now admitting all eligible students at fees charged to sustain the various activities involved. The figure below shows the steady increase in PSSP students' enrolment at Moi University from the 2003/2004 academic year to 2009/2010 academic year.

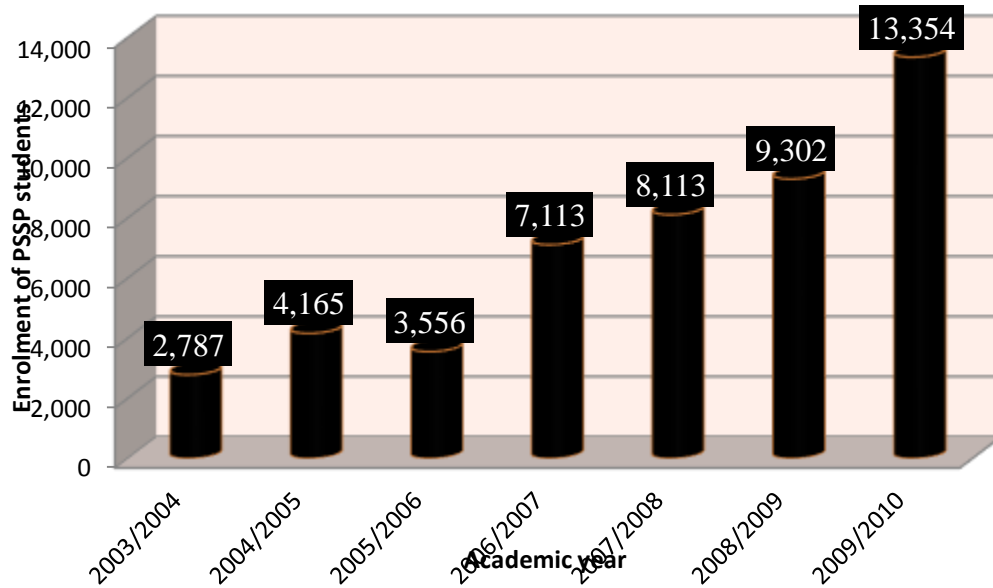


Figure 1: Growth of PSSP Programmes in Moi University

Source: Survey Data, 2012

The study findings from indicate that from the academic year 2006/2007 there was a sharp increase from 7, 113 PSSP students enrolled in academic year 2007 to 13, 354 PSSP students enrolled in academic year 2009/2010. This is an indication of the popularity of these programmes.

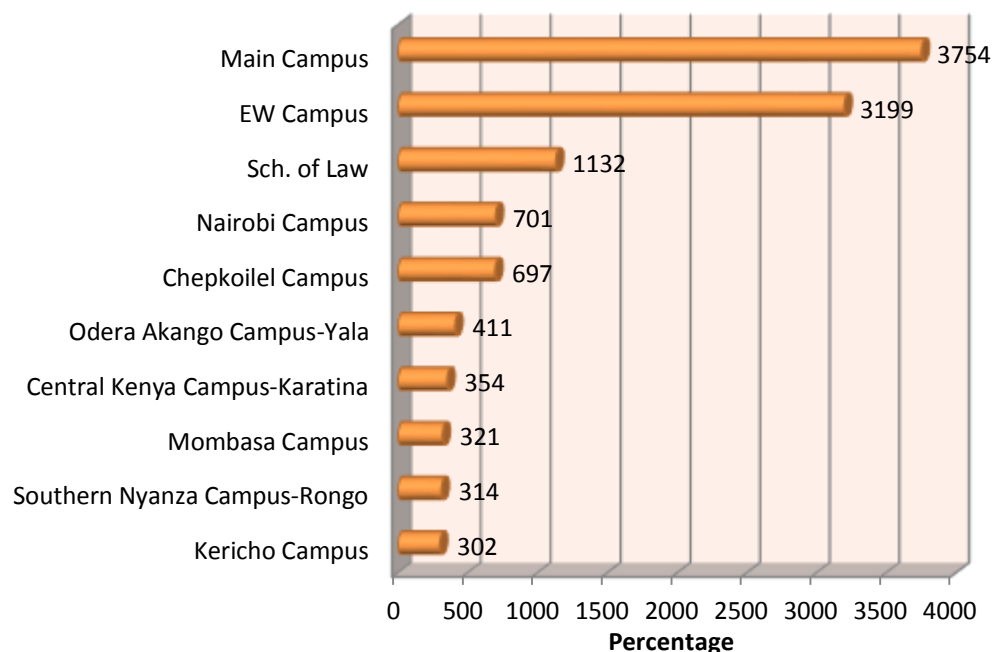


Figure 2: PSSP Programmes in Moi University and its Satellites Campuses

Source: Survey Data, 2012

Main campus had the highest number of PSSP students 3,754, followed closely by Eldoret West campus with 3,199. Nairobi campus had 701 PSSP students, and Chepkoilel campus had 697 PSSP students. This shows that PSSP programmes have expanded to all the satellite campuses contrary to 9 years ago when it was only Moi University Main Campus which was offering the said Programmes.

PSSP students' perceptions on the PSSP programmes and their Lecturers

Table 3: Student's Perception towards their Lecturers

		SA	A	U	D	SD
I enjoy my lectures anytime I attend	Freq.	35	200	78	50	49
	%	8.4	48.2	18.8	12	11.8
I like my lecturers	Freq.	54	239	66	21	29
	%	13	57.6	15.9	5.1	7
I find that I do not need to work hard because others use unfair means to be given marks	Freq.	121	85	71	57	81
	%	29.2	20.5	17.1	13.7	19.5
Lecturers show little interest in the feelings of the students	Freq.	122	130	66	62	35
	%	29.4	31.3	15.9	14.9	8.4
Lecturers are quite incompetent in doing their job	Freq.	61	104	113	86	51
	%	14.7	25.1	27.2	20.7	12.3
Lecturers are fair to me	Freq.	21	161	74	84	69
	%	5.1	38.8	17.8	20.2	16.6

Source: Survey Data, 2012

From the above it is clear that 200(48.2%) of the PSSP students agreed that they enjoyed lectures anytime they attended; 239(57.6%) agreed they liked their lectures; 121(29.2%) agreed that they found that they did not need to work hard because others used unfair means attain marks. In addition, 122(29.4%) and 130(31.3%) agreed and strongly agreed respectively that lecturers showed little interest in the feelings of their students. Moreover, 104(25.1%) agreed that lecturers were fully qualified in doing their job and 161(38.8%) comprised the highest percentage rating PSSP student agreeing that Lecturers were fair to them.

Table 4: Mean and Standard Deviation of Student's Perception towards their Lecturers

	Mean	Std. Deviation
I enjoy my lectures anytime I attend	2.7	1.157
I like my lectures	2.73	4.594
I find that I do not need to work hard because others use unfair means to be given marks	2.74	1.492
Lecturers show little interest in the feelings of the students	2.42	1.281
Lecturers are not fully qualified in doing their job	2.91	1.238
Lecturers are fair to me	3.05	1.217

Source: Survey Data, 2012

The findings in Table 4 show that students agreed that their lecturers showed little interest in the feelings of the PSSP students (mean = 2.42). Students were neutral on whether or not they liked lecturers and on whether or not lecturers were not fully qualified to do their job (mean = 2.73 and 2.91). They were also neutral on whether they did not work hard because others used unfair means to attain marks (mean = 2.74). They enjoyed their lectures any time they attended (mean = 2.7), and that lecturers are fair to them (mean = 3.05).

Table 4: Student's Perception towards PSSP Programmes

		SA	A	U	D	SD
I feel my academic efforts are rewarded the way they should be	Freq.	6	70	78	123	126
	%	1.4	16.9	18.8	29.6	30.4
I often feel that marks given in the courses done does not reflect my ability	Freq.	179	107	15	66	33
	%	43.1	25.8	3.6	15.9	8
I feel a sense of pride attending lectures with regular students	Freq.	67	135	60	63	84
	%	16.1	32.5	14.5	15.2	20.2
There is really too little chance of getting a first class honours degree	Freq.	230	119	21	18	27
	%	55.4	28.7	5.1	4.3	6.5
I feel that in my course., there is a lot of favouritism	Freq.	83	78	84	110	51
	%	20	18.8	20.2	26.5	12.3
Communications seem good between PSSP administrators and the students	Freq.	29	96	66	80	144
	%	7	23.1	15.9	19.3	34.7
The university mission is not clear to me	Freq.	87	127	105	69	24
	%	21	30.6	25.3	16.6	5.8
I often feel that I do not know what goes on in the department/school	Freq.	144	157	36	57	21
	%	34.7	37.8	8.7	13.7	5.1

Source: Survey Data, 2012

As depicted in Table 4, a total of 249(60%) PSSP students either disagreed or strongly disagreed that they felt their academic efforts were rewarded the way they should be. Moreover, 179(43.1%) strongly agreed and 107(25.8%) PSSP students agreed that they often felt that marks given in the courses done did not reflect their abilities. In addition, 135(32.5%) agreed that they felt a sense of pride attending lectures with regular students. More analysis revealed that 230(55.4%) strongly agreed and 119(28.7%) agreed that there was really too little chance of getting a First Class Honours degree. However, 110(26.5%) disagreed that they felt that in their course there was a lot of favouritism. Furthermore, 144(34.7%) strongly disagreed that communications seemed good between PSSP administrators and the students and 127(30.6%) agreed that the university mission was not clear to them as 144(34.7%) strongly agreed and 157(37.8%) agreed that they often felt that they did not know what went on in the department/school.

Table 5: Mean and Standard Deviations of Student's Perception towards PSSP

	Mean	Std. Deviation
I feel my academic efforts are rewarded the way they should be	4.11	4.537
I often feel that marks given in the courses done does not reflect my ability	2.38	2.298
I feel a sense of pride attending lectures with regular students	2.91	1.399
There is really too little chance of getting a first class honours degree	1.78	1.148
I feel that in my course., there is a lot of favouritism	2.98	1.498
Communications seem good between PSSP administrator and the students	3.52	1.353
The university mission is not clear to me	2.69	2.017
I often feel that I do not know what goes on in the department/school	2.17	1.189

Source: Survey Data, 2012

The findings in Table 5 reveal that students disagreed that their academic efforts are rewarded the way they should be (mean = 4.11). They also disagreed that communications seemed good between PSSP administrators and the students (mean = 3.57), agreed that there was really too little chance of getting a First Class Honours (mean = 1.78) and that they did not know what went on in PSSP (mean = 2.17). In addition, they felt that marks given in the courses done do not reflect their ability (mean = 2.17). However, students were neutral that university mission is not clear to me (mean = 2.69), they feel a sense of pride attending lectures with regular students (mean = 2.91) and they feel that in their course there is a lot of favouritism (mean = 2.98).

Staff Perception towards PSSP Administration and PSSP Students

Table 6: Staff Perception towards the Administration of PSSP

		SA	A	U	D	SD
PSSP coordinators are willing to listen to the ideas and feelings of students and lectures even when they disagree.	Freq.	12	84	6	11	13
	%	9.5	66.7	4.8	8.7	10.3
PSSP administrators know and treat students and lecturers as equal partners.	Freq.	24	67	6	17	12
	%	19	53.2	4.8	13.5	9.5
Problems in the campuses are recognized and worked on well by PSSP administrators	Freq.	18	58	0	37	7
	%	14.3	46	0	29.4	5.6
PSSP administrators have ensured that students abide by University rules	Freq.	12	90	6	11	7
	%	9.5	71.4	4.8	8.7	5.6
PSSP administrators take a real-interest in the students future	Freq.	12	63	26	18	7
	%	9.5	50	20.6	14.3	5.6

Source: Survey Data, 2012

From Table 6 above, 84(66.7%) of the staff agreed that PSSP coordinators were willing to listen to the ideas and feelings of students and lecturers even when they disagreed with them. Moreover, 67(53.2%) agree that PSSP administrators know and treat students and lecturers as equal partners, 58(46%) of the staff agreed that problems in the campuses were recognized and worked on well by PSSP administrators. Ninety (71.4%) agreed that PSSP administrators had ensured that students abide by University rules and 63(50%) also agreed that PSSP administrators took a real interest in the students' future.

Table 7: Means and Standard Deviations of Staff perception towards PSSP Administration

	Mean	Std. Deviation
PSSP administrators are willing to listen to the ideas and feelings of students and lecturers even when they disagree.	2.44	1.114
PSSP administrators know and treat students and lecturers as equal partners.	2.41	1.215
Problems in the campuses are recognized and worked on well by PSSP administrators	2.64	1.228
PSSP administrators have ensured that students abide by University rules	2.29	0.956
PSSP administrators take a real-interest in the students future	2.56	1.031

Source: Survey Data, 2012

The staff members agreed that PSSP administrators were willing to listen to the ideas and feelings of students and lecturers even when they disagreed (mean = 2.44). They also agreed that PSSP administrators knew and treated students and lecturers as equal partners (mean = 2.41). PSSP administrators had ensured that students abided by University rules, as evidenced by a mean of 2.29. Lecturers were neutral that "problems in the campuses are recognized and worked on well by PSSP administrators" (mean = 2.64) and "PSSP administrators take a real-interest in the students future" (mean = 2.56).

Implication to Research and Practice

The expansion, diversification and privatization of public university education provision have brought new challenges to university management in Kenya. This has come along with diverse opinions from different stakeholders including students and staff. The aim of Kenya Vision 2030 from this challenging backdrop is to; create a globally competitive and prosperous country with a high quality of life by 2030. It aims to transform Kenya into; a newly industrializing, middle-income 15 country, providing a high quality of life to all its citizens in a clean and secure environment, which is only possible if our universities are able to provide quality education. This paper thus focuses on the perceptions of these stakeholders on management and administration of parallel degree programmes. This may at the end help managers and administrators of higher education in setting up a model that will cater for the interest of all stakeholders.

CONCLUSION

It is evident that the PSSP students admitted to study programmes at Moi University meet the minimum entry requirements for the University. A high percentage (79%) of PSSP students in all Moi University campuses is integrated. The perceptions of students towards PSSP differ from that of the staff. The staff has a more positive attitude towards PSSP and asserts that they are willing to put in more effort to ensure that PSSP achieves its objectives. However, the students express their lack of confidence in the programmes they are undertaking and state that there is little chance of any of them getting first class honours degree because of shortage of lecturers, poorly stocked libraries lack of internet facilities, a lot of cheating in examinations and favouritism in award of marks by the lecturers.

RECOMMENDATION

The university management boards should set up policies that support and enforce research-led faculties by ensuring that their institutions have quality assurance policies and quality regulatory standards are adhered to. The councils should allocate some of the earnings from these programmes towards the provision of physical facilities, library services and equipment appropriate and adequate to support learning /teaching. This way, universities will not be viewed purely as business entities but as institutions on which a successful society can be built.

The introduction of PSSP in public universities has no doubt had a positive financial impact on the public universities in particular and to Kenya as a country and the universities and the government therefore need to assist PSSP students to finance their studies at these universities by increasing the capacity of Higher Education Loans Board to finance all the students that require loans to undertake their studies in these universities to completion.

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