

Application of Best Management Practices in Curriculum Leadership in Production of Quality Graduates in Universities in Kenya

Kanyiri, Lucy Ikiara¹, Alfred Mutema², Alfred Kamau³

¹School of Health Sciences, Meru University of Science and Technology

^{2,3}Professors, School of Education and Social Sciences, Kenya Methodist University

Abstract: *Universities play a critical role in contributing to the economic development of any nation. Universities develop manpower which is a significant driver of economic growth. Management practices are linked to the success of universities in producing holistic graduates who have the necessary knowledge, skills, competencies and values that are required in a globally competitive society. Literature available indicates that there exists an astounding difference in the quality of graduates produced in different universities. The universities in Africa, Kenya included, have been lagging behind in the yearly ranking of the universities worldwide. Regardless of the criteria being used whether in terms of research output, presence in the web or skills and competences of graduates, African universities have continued to trail behind. The question has been what the African universities have failed to do to be able to compete favorably with other universities in the world. Further analysis of literature also indicates good management practices in curriculum leadership will be able to drive the universities to produce quality graduates. This take cognizant that universities offer approved curricula that have met the criteria for design and implementation. The study sets out to establish the best management practices in curriculum leadership that support production of quality graduates. The study was guided by an objective of determining the application of best management practices in curriculum leadership implemented by the universities to support production of quality graduates. The research used descriptive survey research design. The target population was 66 accredited universities in Kenya where six universities were sampled. Based on the findings of the study the universities need to actively collaborate with the industry in the development and implementation of the curriculum. The study also recommends that the universities identify and implement best management practices in curriculum leadership such as faculty development, scheduling for curriculum change and adequate resource allocation to support production of quality graduates.*

Keywords: Management practices, curriculum leadership, quality graduates

1. Introduction

Curriculum is a design/plan for learning, much like the blueprint/drawing for a house, Glatthorn (2009). Wiles and Bondi (2007) observes that curriculum represents a set of desired goals or values that are activated throughout development and implementation process which culminate in successful learning experiences for students. The curriculum is intended for students to experience. The expectations held on the student experiencing the curriculum and the measure of success is by the student outcomes - quality of graduates produced. Continuous nurturing of the curricula, through monitoring and evaluation is made possible through effective curriculum leadership. Curriculum leadership focuses on both on what is being learned (the curriculum) and how it is taught (the instruction), Glatthorn et al (2012). Goodlad (2004) observes that in the past 40 years, curriculum has focused primarily on results where the processes of the implementation lack emphasis by the curriculum process and the implementers. A curriculum leader is expected to know the basics of curriculum development and implementation. Curriculum is prepared based on steps to address the needs of the students, society and demands of the subject area.

It is in view of this that universities need to focus on the management practices that promote effective curriculum leadership. Management practices are defined as a way of doing things in the organization which has been developed over a given period of time and yielded positive

results, Evans & Davis (2005). Applied in this study it is taken to mean best practices in curriculum leadership that are identified and used by universities to ensure curriculum development, implementation and continuous monitoring and review for quality graduates. This study investigated the influence of management practices in curriculum leadership towards producing quality graduates.

1.1 Objectives of the study

The study sought to address the following objective

To determine the influence of best management practices in curriculum leadership in production of quality graduates in universities in Kenya.

2. Literature Review

Goodlad (2004) contends that in the past 40 years, curriculum has focused primarily on results where the processes of the implementation lack emphasis by the curriculum processes and implementers. Lavine (2005) also agrees with Goodlad that many incidences the role of curriculum leadership has been perceived or related to compliance to accreditations requirements and policies. This has led to ignoring of the critical success practices for effective curriculum development and implementation.

Curriculum development and implementation is an essential function of the curriculum leadership whether the role is

carried out by the top level management, deans, departmental heads or the faculty in the classroom set up. Wiles and Bondi (2007) argue that curriculum represents set of desired goals or values that are activated throughout development and implementation process which culminate in successful learning experiences for students. Therefore, the universities having a number of approved curricula cannot guarantee quality graduates. Curriculum development and implementation have many complexities. This requires continuous nurturing, monitoring and evaluation. This is made possible through curriculum leadership.

Curriculum leadership focuses on both on what is being learned (the curriculum) and how it is taught (the instruction). Being a leader one has the responsibility to make sure that the institution has a quality curriculum and that the curriculum is implemented effectively. A curriculum leader has to know how the curriculum design informs instructional methods. Glatthorn (2009) provides four major tasks of curriculum leadership: ensuring curriculum quality and applicability, integrating and aligning the curriculum, implementing the curriculum efficiently and effectively, regularly evaluating, enriching, and updating the curriculum. A study conducted by Ylimaki and Brunner (2011) on how to improve literacy curricula found that strong and directive curriculum leadership was essential to create positive learning and safe, orderly schools. The study focused on school mission, high student expectations, pedagogical expertise, extended time on task and positive home-school relations. The results revealed that appropriate instructional leadership behaviour meant inviting teachers to share leadership responsibilities which in return increase student engagement and learning.

Therefore, curriculum leadership is a critical concern for the universities in producing quality graduates. There are many tasks associated with effective curriculum leadership which include but not limited to curriculum development, implementation, nurturing, monitoring, evaluation, review and maintenance. In every task curriculum leaders have to continually build practices that focuses on establishing new direction considering the emerging needs, aligning people and resources, motivating participants and involvement of stakeholders to produce meaningful change within and outside university, Wiles & Bondi (2007).

In a university set curriculum leadership helps to determines outcomes of what should be achieved through the process of learning. This requires selecting management practices that are best done by the top level management of the university, deans of schools and faculties, heads of departments and the faculty in supporting learning process in the university. At every level of management, curriculum leadership should target the learning experience of the student and by so doing the student experiencing the curriculum are able to develop skills which enable them to be knowledgeable, creative and responsive to the changing needs of the society. Wiles & Bondi (2007) argues that once the global goals for the curriculum are determined, the leaders need to follow a deductive process to give more and more definition to the programme. Analogous to an architect designing a house, the curriculum leader helps the stakeholders in the university to provide highly detailed outcomes of what is intended

from the students. This includes goals, objectives, standards, programs, content, pedagogical strategies, resources and even lesson planning.

According to Oliva & Gordon (2013), a curriculum leader defines the vision and tasks which transit from analysis to designing a comprehensive plan, implementing the curriculum, and, finally, evaluating the results. These evolving roles for the curriculum leader include building a team to work together over a period of time to improve the curriculum which is critical in producing quality graduates. University curriculum team has to be carefully selected considering the individuals who are chosen for their roles and ability to contribute to such work. Virginia Beach City Schools (2008) observes that curriculum work is always dependent on the human element for its success. As the teams implement the curriculum plan, the curriculum leaders must monitor and coordinate the work being done for successful maintenance of the curriculum. Such supervision is best done using a kind of "review and validation" technique that identifies, in advance, what is being done and what the work product is to be, Wiles & Bondi (2007). Using the curriculum objective or outcome as a guide to managing curriculum work helps motivate everyone involved. A successful curriculum development project instills confidence and a winning attitude among those involved in the planning, development and implementation.

Jailall & Glatthorn (2009) explicitly addresses curriculum leadership practices that managers of educational institutions need to embrace to produce quality results. This include developing school visions of quality curriculum, supplementing the national or divisional educational goals, developing schools own programme of studies, developing learning centered schedule, determining the nature and extent of curriculum integration, aligning curriculum, monitoring and assisting in curriculum implementation, developing yearly planning calendars for operationalizing the curriculum, developing units of study, enriching the curriculum and remediating learning, and evaluating the curriculum. By doing, this curriculum leader should practice what Jailall & Glatthorn refers to as intentional leadership. They argue that once intentional leadership is enforced, curriculum leadership provides clarity to the students and staff about what should be learnt, also it provides an opportunity to develop and empower future leaders, provides an opportunity for continuous improvement, provides an opportunity to establish goals, and an opportunity to improved alignment. Stabback, (2016) concurs with Jailall & Glatthorn by purporting that the extent to which the administrators provide guidelines to the teachers on aims and objectives of the curriculum at various levels, explaining educational philosophy underlying the curriculum and the approaches of teaching, learning and assessment have influence on the quality of graduates produced. Cohen (1999), also argue that a good curriculum is that which is anchored on existing educational philosophies which include; essentialism, progressivism, perennialism, existentialism and behaviorism, example a curriculum should not only promote intellectual growth but also character formation. Educational philosophy anchors the curriculum to a specific belief system. Therefore, the underlying principle of effective curriculum leadership in

the universities is defining and directing the faculty on the path to be followed in order to achieve educational objective of producing quality graduates.

Wiles & Bondi (2007) argues that an important component of the curriculum leadership is the extent to which it models the needs of the society. If the curriculum has a practical value to addressing issues affecting the society quality is inherent. In providing leadership, curriculum leaders must ensure the development and review of the curriculum is need based drawn from the relevant stakeholders. This is possible by involving key stakeholders in the curriculum processes. Stakeholders are those groups of people who are consumers of the curriculum output directly or indirectly. Monson and Monson (1993) concurs that there is need for collaborative and sanctioned participation by all the stakeholders in the curriculum development and revision to ensure curriculum yields desired outcome. Such stakeholders may include the students, government, sponsors, and employers. Jelinek (1978) observes that an effective curriculum is that which improves the human conditions. This indicates that a curriculum should be able to respond to day to day human critical needs. This standpoint is also emphasized by MacDonald (1975), where he points out that any good curriculum is conversely related to human interests.

Also a curriculum leader has role to ensure that teaching and learning is mapped to the curriculum. A key important point is providing well-articulated courses that ensure that the curriculum is adapted to the needs of the society and meets needs and expectations of the students. Schmoker (2006) observes that lack of clearly articulated curriculum hinders improvement efforts which results to curriculum chaos. The curriculum leader ensures that the role of the students is well articulated. This includes what the student experiences and what the student is able to do. On the other hand, in order to improve curriculum teachers must be given opportunity to meet and plan courses and assessments. The teachers are clearly guided to; effectively prepare expected learning outcomes of the course that are observable through the student behavior, course outlines that are guided by the curriculum, resources that are in tandem with the curriculum needs, design standards-based instruction, deliver high quality student centered instruction, promote high levels of student engagement, uses assessment and feedback for student learning. These efforts are made possible through building strong working teams. The curriculum leadership includes considering key stakeholders when planning for curriculum development, monitoring, evaluation, and change. Faculty is the primary source of assistance, but parents and community members also play a key role. Engaging these groups means forming a working team and honing their skills. Schmoker, (2009) observes that teams must meet regularly to ensure fidelity to good curriculum that is replete with higher-order skills and habits of mind. Authentic teams build effective curriculum-based lessons and units together which they routinely refine together on the basis of common assessment data.

Lastly there is need to plan and manage curriculum changes. Curriculum leaders have to be skilled at developing plans for changing. Ways must be sought to illuminate the problems with the curriculum and provide paths to the solution. The leader has to examine the whole notion of planned change. What must be done to get others contribute to the planned change, how exchange of information is facilitated. How the proposed change fit into the larger organization. Effective change is based on successful planning for change. Curriculum leader's needs to understand the tools available that boosts change efforts and empower the curriculum processes. This includes use of committees, technologies, assessments, and feedback mechanisms among others, Schmoker, (2009).

Based on the literature reviewed this study focused on the management practices that universities need to adopt in providing curriculum leadership in order to produce quality graduates. These include but not limited to: provision of vision, curriculum meeting clients' needs, aligning curriculum and instruction, building of working teams, planning for curriculum change and managing curriculum change process. Individual universities also provided management practices in curriculum leadership that are unique in their respective universities.

2.1 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework illustrated the relationship between curriculum leadership and production of quality graduates in the universities.

3. Methodology

Descriptive survey design was used to collect perceptions on the extent of application of the best management practices in curriculum leadership by the sampled universities. Orodho & Kombo (2002) and Mbwesa (2006) agree that surveys are relevant in study when the purpose is to explain relationship between variables. This was applicable in this study. The relationship between management practices in curriculum leadership and quality graduates produced in the universities. Seven (7) universities formed the sample which included Kenyatta University (A), University of Nairobi (B), African Nazarene University (C) Kenya Methodist University (D), Meru University of Science and Technology (E), Strathmore University (F) and University of Embu (G). Five universities participated in the study. University E and G did not participate in the study. A total of 120 faculty staff was included in the study. Self-administered questionnaires were used to collect data. The data generated was analysed using inferential statistics where analysis of variance was computed and where applicable post hoc test using Duncan Multiple Range Test (DMRT) was conducted.

4. Results and Discussions

The analysis and discussions are presented as follows:

4.1 Provision of Curriculum Vision

The study sought to establish the extent to which universities provided well-articulated vision to guide the operations of the faculty in curriculum development and implementation. ANOVA results yielded a $P < 0.05$. This allowed the researcher to conclude there existed significance differences in articulation of vision across the universities. The researcher further sought to establish where significance differences existed by subjecting each practice to ANOVA test. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Provision of vision practices

	Parameters	P Value	Conclusion
1	Curriculum have well-articulated Vision	$P > 0.05$	No significance difference.
2	The school/faculty vision is well articulated and is in line with the University Vision	$P < 0.05$	There was significance difference.
3	The faculty understands well school and departmental vision	$P < 0.05$	There was significance difference.
4	The faculty applies the school/departmental vision in formulating the curriculum	$P > 0.05$	No significance difference.
5	The faculty understands the educational philosophy underlying the curricula being implemented	$P > 0.05$	No significance difference.

Table 1 indicates significance difference was noted in articulating school vision and faculty understanding of school vision and ability to align them to support curriculum development. The DMRT results in table 2 shows universities that were similar and different.

Table 2: DMRT results on provision of vision practices

(i) School Vision is Well Articulated			
University	N	Subset	
		1	2
D	30	2.40	
A	20		3.75
C	25		4.00
B	24		4.25
F	21		4.40
Sig.		1.000	.140
(ii) Faculty understands School and Departmental Vision			
University	N	Subset	
		1	2
D	30	2.20	
A	20	3.20	3.20
C	25		3.75
B	24		4.00
F	21		4.20
Sig.		.063	.084

Table 2 (i) shows that four universities A, C, B, and F were paired together in terms of having well-articulated school vision. University D performed relatively low in articulating school vision. Part (ii) shows that University D and A were similar and were rated low at the level which the faculty understood school and departmental vision. The findings agreed with Ylimaki and Brunner (2011) where the duo found out that school mission was instrumental in building a successful literacy curriculum. The mission focuses of the stakeholders on the areas that require attention and improvement in the curriculum. Similarly the findings also agreed with the study of ((Oliva & Gordon (2013) & Stabback (2016)) where curriculum vision leads to analysis of tasks that transit to designing comprehensive plan to guide implementation of the curriculum.

4.2 Curriculum meeting the needs of the clients

The study sought to establish the extent to which the universities ensured that the curriculum met the needs of the clients. The outcome of the curriculum depends on the level to which it meets the needs of the stakeholders. ANOVA results yielded a $P < 0.05$. This allowed the researcher to conclude there existed significance differences in curriculum meeting client needs across the universities. ANOVA results for each practice are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Curriculum meeting client needs

	Parameters	P Value	Conclusion
1	The university regularly consults with employers to understand their needs	$P < 0.05$	There was significance difference.
2	Curriculum has a practical value to addressing issues affecting the society	$P > 0.05$	No significance difference.
3	Curriculum offered by the university is tailored to the student needs	$P > 0.05$	No significance difference
4	The university share curricula objectives with the students regularly	$P < 0.05$	There is significance difference.

Table 3 shows that universities were reluctant to consult with employers in the process of curriculum development and reviews. Employers are instrumental because they are the consumers of the knowledge, skills, competencies and attitudes acquired by the graduates. As such it is important for the universities to incorporate the employers in the process of developing the curriculum so as to understand the needs of the market. This proposition is supported by the study of Wiles and Bondi (2007) where they found that the success of the curriculum is built among other things motivation of the participants and involvement of stakeholders which are key in meaningful curriculum change within and outside the university. Similarly the universities need to share curriculum objectives with the students. Table 4 presents DMRT results to show the universities that performed well in involving the stakeholders and also continuously sharing curriculum objectives with the students experiencing the curriculum.

Table 4: Curriculum meeting client needs

(i) University regularly consults employers			
University	N	Subset	
		1	2
D	30	1.75	
A	20	2.00	
B	24		3.50
C	25		3.75
F	21		4.00
Sig.		.671	.396

(ii) University share curriculum objectives with students			
University	N	Subset	
		1	
D	30	2.40	
A	20	3.00	
C	25	3.20	
F	21	3.75	
B	24	3.75	
Sig.			.110

Universities D and A rated lowly in stakeholders' involvement. The result shows that universities were comparable in sharing curriculum objectives with the students. However university F performed relatively well. Also university D was noted to have performed poorly in sharing curriculum objectives with the students.

4.3 Aligning curriculum to teaching and learning

The study further sought to establish the extent to which university curricula were aligned to teaching and learning. ANOVA results yielded a $P > 0.05$. This allowed the researcher to conclude there were no significance differences in aligning curriculum to teaching and learning across the universities. Specific practices that pointed out that university curricula were aligned to instruction were analysed and ANOVA results presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Aligning curriculum to teaching and learning practices

	Parameters	P Value	Conclusion
1	Learning is closely mapped to the curriculum	$P > 0.05$	No significance difference.
2	Programme expected learning outcomes are clearly articulated and well known by the faculty	$P > 0.05$	No significance difference.
3	Course outlines are linked to curriculum objectives	$P > 0.05$	No significance difference.
4	Faculty is guided on innovative instructional strategies	$P < 0.05$	There was significance difference.
5	Roles of the student are well defined to ensure student engagement	$P > 0.05$	No significance difference.
6	Resources are provided that support curriculum needs	$P > 0.05$	No significance difference.

Table 5 shows that generally there were no significance differences in aligning curriculum to teaching and learning across the universities. However, a significance difference was noted on guiding faculty on innovative instructional strategies across the universities. Ylimaki & Brunner (2011) observes that successful curriculum leadership should focus on pedagogical expertise of the teacher involved in the development and implementation of the curriculum. The DMRT results in Table 6 present where the differences lie.

Table 6: Faculty is guided on innovative instructional

University	N	Subset		
		1	2	3
D	30	2.20		
A	20	2.75	2.75	
F	21		3.75	3.75
C	25			3.80
B	24			4.00
Sig.		.467	.067	.672

Universities D and A performed poorly in guiding their faculty staff on innovative pedagogical strategies. Universities B and C were doing well in regularly providing opportunities and required support to build capacity for their faculty.

4.4 Building curriculum working teams

The study sought to determine the extent to which universities had built strong working teams to support curriculum processes. ANOVA results yielded a $P < 0.05$. This allowed the researcher to conclude there were significance differences building curriculum teams across the universities. The ANOVA results are presented in table 4.

Table 7: Building curriculum working team practices

	Parameters	P Value	Conclusion
1	Faculty is regularly involved in planning, developing, monitoring and review of the curriculum	$P > 0.05$	No significance difference.
2	Stakeholders are involved in providing input on university curricula	$P < 0.05$	There was significance difference.

Table 7 indicates that whereas universities involved faculty in curriculum development, stakeholders' involvement from the industry was not given due importance in curriculum leadership across the universities. This means universities overlook an important element of curriculum leadership. Schmoker (2009) observes that curriculum teams must meet regularly to ensure fidelity to good curriculum. The DMRT in Table 8 provides information on where the differences exist.

Table 8: Stakeholders involved in providing input

University	N	Subset	
		1	2
A	20	2.20	
D	30	2.20	
C	25	3.40	3.40
F	21	3.40	3.40
B	24		4.25
Sig.		.102	.226

Universities A and D recorded low scores. Universities C, B and F were performing well in ensuring stakeholders were involved in providing input during curriculum development processes.

4.5 Planning for curriculum change

The study sought to establish the extent to which universities planned for curriculum change by adopting wide and all-inclusive strategies. ANOVA results yielded a $P < 0.05$. This allowed the researcher to conclude there were significance differences planning for curriculum change across the universities. The ANOVA results are presented in Table 9.

Table 9: Planning for curriculum change practices

	Parameters	P Value	Conclusion
1	Plans for change are consultatively developed	$P > 0.05$	No significance difference.
2	Path to be followed in the process of change is well defined and communicated	$P < 0.05$	There was significance difference.
3	Resources required for the anticipated change are provided	$P < 0.05$	There was significance difference.

Analysis of variance results presented in table 5 allows the researcher to conclude that universities are different in articulating the process of curriculum change and communicating the same to the schools and faculties. Similarly universities were different in planning and providing required resources to support anticipated curriculum changes. The findings are supported by the study of Jaillall & Glatthorn (2009) on the curriculum leadership where developing learning centered schedule and developing yearly planning calendars for operationalizing curriculum change are important elements. This is also coupled with planning for resources required for the curriculum change. The differences across the universities are explained by DMRT presented on Table 10.

Table 10: DMRT Results on planning for curriculum change practices

(i) Path followed in process of change is developed and communicated				
University	N	Subset		
		1	2	3
D	30	2.00		
A	20	2.40	2.40	
B	24	3.00	3.00	3.00
C	25		3.40	3.40
F	21			3.80
Sig.		.095	.095	.177
(ii) Resources required for change are provided				
University	N	Subset		
		1	2	3
A	20	1.40		
D	30	1.80	1.80	
B	24		3.00	3.00
C	25			3.40
F	21			3.40
Sig.		.538	.075	.561

Universities D and A performed below average score in having a well-defined procedure for curriculum change process, while universities C, B and F were comparable. Universities C and F were doing well in ensuring resources to support curriculum change were available when required.

4.6 Managing curriculum change process

The study sought to establish the extent to which the universities effectively managed curriculum change process. ANOVA results yielded a $P > 0.05$. This allowed the researcher to conclude there were no significance differences in managing curriculum change process across the universities. ANOVA results for each practice are presented in table 11.

Table 11: Managing the curriculum change practices

	Parameters	P Value	Conclusion
1	The management closely monitors curriculum implementation and evaluation	$P > 0.05$	No significance difference.
2	A curriculum team monitors curriculum implementation	$P > 0.05$	No significance difference.
3	Appropriate technologies are put in place to support curriculum delivery	$P > 0.05$	No significance difference.
4	Methods of assessments and feedback mechanisms are clearly articulated and functional	$P > 0.05$	No significance difference.
5	Resources are aligned with a view of implementing the curriculum successfully	$P > 0.05$	No significance difference.
6	The university regularly benchmark implementation of the curricula in the university	$P > 0.05$	No significance difference.

Table 11 shows that there were no significance differences in managing curriculum change process across the universities.

5. Conclusion

The study revealed that curriculum leadership is a key enabler to producing quality graduates in the universities. Universities need to identify management practices in curriculum leadership that will support curriculum development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Universities were generally found weak in articulating school vision, involvement of the stake holders especially the employers in curriculum development or review processes, weak strategies for faculty capacity building especially in pedagogy, lack of strong curriculum teams and lack of elaborate planning for curriculum change.

6. Recommendations

Based on the findings universities need to ensure University vision is in tandem with schools' visions and consequently the curriculum visions should be mapped-up. The universities need to make deliberate effort to involve the stakeholders especially the students and employers in the curriculum development and review processes. Universities need to collaborate with the industry to develop occupational skills and competencies required by the industry. This will help to package the curricula and also guide student assessment in achieving the required knowledge, skills, competencies and attitudes required in the job market. The universities have to endeavor to put in place curriculum teams to monitor curriculum processes, ensure regular training of the faculty on evolving and innovative teaching and learning approaches and last but not the least plan for curriculum change by well defining the change process and providing the necessary resources to support the curriculum change.

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