Mushrooming of Middle Level Tourism and Hospitality Training Colleges and Quality of Higher Education: A Case Study of Eldoret Town-Kenya

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Abstract

Education is a set of processes designed to transmit knowledge, skills and values to develop individual mental ability. In this regard, it is viewed as the gateway to social and economic advancement. As a strategy to achieve this social and economic development, the Kenyan government introduced the free primary education that saw the primary and secondary schools flooding with students. As a result, form four leavers who can neither be admitted in the public universities nor afford to privately sponsor themselves in either private or public universities have been on the increase. This scenario has prompted them to join affordable middle level colleges. With the ever increasing number of high school leavers, entrepreneurs have set to invest in the education sector by establishing numerous colleges across the country and Eldoret town is no exception. Uncontrolled increase in the number of middle level colleges and a shortage of qualified lecturers is undermining the quality of higher education in Kenya. As a result, this study aims at investigating the impact of these colleges on the quality of education. As a concern, the government through its various bodies in charge of education should take swift measures to ensure that; while it provides adequate education for its citizens, this trend does not compromise the quality of education offered. Therefore, throughout the process of educational development and technology, the major element that should be considered is the quality of education standards.

Keywords: Eldoret, Hospitality, Training, Tourism, Quality

1. Introduction

Education is a set of processes designed to transmit knowledge, skills and values to develop individual mental ability. Moreover, knowledge imparts moral values and the methods to increase the strength of mind which leads to improvement of character. In this regard, education is viewed as the gateway to social and economic advancement. More particularly, education is one of the few ways of reducing poverty in Kenya and of creating the elusive middle class (GOK, 2005). More particularly, Education plays a central role in modern labor markets. Hundreds of studies in many different countries and time periods have confirmed that better-educated individuals earn higher wages, experience less unemployment, and work in more prestigious occupations than their less-educated counterparts (Cohn and Addison, 1997).

On the same note, training is important because international tourism has become a complex industry requiring specialized skills. Whenever the required skills cannot be supplied, the implementation of certain projects becomes hampered even in instances where substantial additional employment opportunities could be generated (Kenya, 1983). Training, in this regard, is the transition between formal education and the needs of occupation and employment. It "equips individuals with specific skills, attitudes and work habits which enhance their productive output and job satisfaction" (Kenya, 1983, p. 65).

2. Role of Education in National Development

Education as over the years been cited as a key development pillar geared to poverty reduction and economic growth. In this regard, education is not only a welfare indicator per se, but is also a key determinant of earnings and therefore, an important exit route from poverty (GOK, 2005:23). Moreover, education is an investment in human capital and empirical evidence, based on endogenous growth models, shows that human capital is a key determinant of economic growth (GOK 2005:23). Indeed, sustainable development is only possible if there is a critical mass of people. Studies on poverty in Kenya show that education is an important factor in poverty reduction. In addition, there is a strong positive relationship between human capital and earnings as well as the overall productivity that is well captured by measures of human capital returns. Recent studies of human capital returns in Kenya show that capital returns increase as the level of education goes higher. There are also studies showing that individuals benefit a great deal from the education of others. These findings highlight the importance of an educated population (GOK 2005:24). GOK (2005:24) argues that education can reduce social economic inequality. Today, Kenya is characterized by large inequalities with respect to income distribution and

this has constrained economic growth. As such investment in education is an important strategy to address such inequalities and thus facilitate faster economic growth. Government involvement in education and training is therefore justified on the basis that human capital development has large social returns (GOK 2005: 23).

In addition, for the country to achieve desired economic growth targets and social development, a high priority needs to be placed on the development of human capital through education and training (GOK 2005:4). Not only will the growth of the education and training sector contribute to economic growth and social returns, it will also increase demand for more equitable education attainment, which is an important human welfare indicator by itself. Therefore, achievements in education will reduce poverty, achieve the desired economic growth, create more employment and guarantee sustainable development for the Kenyan people now and in the future.

According to the GOK (2005), provision of education and training to all Kenyans is fundamental to the success of the government's overall development strategy. In this regard, the long term objective of the government is to provide every Kenyan with basic quality education and training. Education aims at enhancing the ability of Kenyans to preserve and utilize the environment for productive gain and sustainable livelihoods. Further, development of quality human resource is central to the attainment of national goals for industrial development. Finally, education is necessary for the development and protection of democratic institutions and human rights (GOK, 2005:1). At independence in 1963, the government recognized education s a basic human right and a powerful tool for human resource and national development. Since then, the government's policy documents have reiterated the importance of education of education in eliminating poverty, disease and ignorance (GOK, 2005:4). Moreover, GOK (2005:4) reiterates the government's commitment to an education system that guarantees the right of every learner to quality and relevant education.

2.1 Quality of education

There are many educational institutions that are offering a variety of courses for different groups of people in different age groups. The reason for this is that there is a need for the education of people. The fact that people from all over the world are trying to educate themselves is a good sign, but at the same time, when there is a rush of people to want to study, the quality of the educational systems and especially the individual institutions may slip and it can cause the decrease in the quality of the education that is provided. There are various indicators that help to measure the quality of the education that is being provided in each of the educational institutions. These indicators are listed here.

2.1.1 Number of Students that Pass National Examinations

There are certain national exams that are uniform and are conducted for all the people doing the same course. This is an important indicator of the quality of the education that is provided. The reason for this is that when there is a uniform examination system and a grading system for the students, it is easy to identify the best performing institution. This will also enable in comparing the various institutions against each other (http://www.saching.com).

2.1.2 Number of People Who Get Jobs in Recognized Facilities after Graduation

The number of people who obtain regular well paid jobs can also be used as an indicator of the reputation and also the quality of the educational institution. There are various organizations that provide job offers to the best institutions only. This can be used in the process of grading the educational institution (<u>http://www.saching.com</u>).

2.1.3 The Level of Satisfaction of Employers, Supervisors, Clients

The level of satisfaction of the job done by the fresh graduate is another important factor that plays a role in identifying the best institution. The reason is that as the education that a person gets is very high and of good quality, the job done by the person is also usually on par with the quality. This is usually assessed by the people who are around the person who is working. These may include the employer and the satisfaction of the employer is very important. Similarly, the satisfaction of the various supervisors and also the clients who have come into contact with the individual and have noted the knowledge and also the skills of the person are another method of assessing the bets educational institutions (http://www.saching.com).

2.1.4 The Percentage of Students Who Further Their Education At The Graduate Level

The percentage of the students from educational institutions who further their education in the other educational institutions that are higher centers of learning is another important factor that is used in identifying the best

educational institution. There are many students who have not been to a good educational institution and so they are unable to further their skills and also education. These are the various factors that play a role in the assessment of the level, quality and the reputation of the educational institution.

2.2 Measuring the Quality of Education

Tracking the quality of education is complicated by a lack of objective and consistent measures of how much students learn at school. Data from national examinations are often undermined by the practice of adjusting scores to meet pass rates and by concerns over cheating. International comparative tests are more reliable but cost limits them to small sample studies. Literacy rates provide an essentially historical picture of how much adults learned when they were children. The assessment of quality is therefore usually based on proxy indicators. The proportion of qualified teachers has an influence on quality and is one of the most common proxy indicators. Completion rates have also been found to be closely correlated with quality since children are more willing to stay at school if they are given a good education. With relatively low numbers of students progressing to higher levels of education, partner countries need to ensure that each level of schooling is valuable in its own right, in addition to providing a stepping stone to further studies or the workforce. This is particularly important in vocational and technical education where many countries are struggling to transform ineffective training systems.

2.3 Tourism Education and Training

According to Mayaka and Akama (2007:1) 'Kenya's tourism industry is relatively well developed (with first class hospitality establishments and tourist facilities that are juxtaposed in close proximity to pristine glistering tropical sand beaches and world renowned wildlife attractions in protected parks and reserves). Hence the country, in recent years, has become a popular destination for international visitors, especially European and North American tourists, haggling for safari tourism experience combined with relaxation in pristine glistering tropical sand beaches'. In this regard it can be argued that tourism is Kenya's leading foreign exchange earner which generates significant government revenues and employment opportunities (Sindiga, 1994). Moreover, Tourism is a labour-intensive service industry, dependent for survival (and for competitive advantage) on the availability of good quality personnel to deliver, operate, and manage the tourist product (Amoah & Baum, 1997).In response, the quality and availability of skilled staff is a key competitive requirement for any tourism enterprise (Peacock & Ladkin, 2002).

Sindiga (1994:46) argues that 'Tourism is particularly susceptible to the sensitivities and characteristics of the personnel who handle travelers. Indeed, the growth of demand for tourism itself reflects tastes and trends in personal consumption, factors which the employees of tourism enterprises should be sensitized to'. Particularly, 'jobs in tourism are available in hotels, restaurants, bars, transport, tourist offices, tour guiding, game viewing, trophies and souvenirs and in other services and recreational activities' (Sindiga, 1994: 46). He further adds that Most of the jobs created in tourism are in the accommodation sector which includes hotels, lodges, camp sites and guest houses.

From the preceding arguments there is need to develop specific standards that will inform the training of tourism personnel. Standards, in this regard, are set up as a measure of quality of tourism training. In this context therefore, the standardization is the process of setting up measures for quality of skills employed in the Tourism Industry. There are tangible benefits realized from standardization of training in the tourism industry. Ultimately, standardization leads to quality, which gives the tourism industry a competitive edge because of consumer satisfaction. An objective of standardization is to equip the industry with qualified personnel whose performance will satisfy the present and future needs of our visitors. To effectively address the need for quality, the ministry of tourism through Catering and Tourism Development Levy Trustees (CTDLT) has endeavored to be customer focused. The endeavor is translated into levy payer and CTDLT partnership that compels duty and loyalty. The duty of CTDLT standards development is to ensure that training, which is the bridge between the workers' skills and end results address the needs of tourism industry (http://www.ctdlt.co.ke/standards.php).

CTDLT alludes to the fact that even with the most positive leadership influence; the best worker may not attain quality because of lack of technical know-how. Appropriate training impacts knowledge and skills and the result is competence. A worker cannot produce quality service if he does not know how to do it. High level of tourist satisfaction is an indication of high product quality. As such they are focused on standardization on harmonizing training in the industry. Harmonization is through continuously monitoring and evaluating training institutions for compliance (http://www.ctdlt.co.ke/standards.php).



Table 1:CTDLT'S Requirements

Course	Training Facilities	Teaching Staff	Courses offered by tourism and hospitality training institutions
 Level of training, No. of classes, No. of students, Mode of training, Curriculum offered, Examining body 	 Classrooms Hotels Training restaurant Training kitchen Workshops Offices 	 Professional qualificatio ns Teaching experience Teaching subjects 	 Food & beverage production Food & beverage sales and service House keeping and laundry Tours & travel management Tour guide & Tour guiding Hotel & institutional mngt Catering & hotel mngt Tourism and environmental studies (http://www.ctdlt.co.ke/stand ards-regulations.pdf) Front office and tourism operations Hotel mngt & administration

2.3.1 Development of Tourism Education in Kenya

According to Sindiga, (1999) there was no tourism education policy in Kenya up to the 1960s. Up till then, the tourism businesses were run by expatriates. Tourism and hospitality education was started in Kenya in 1969 through the introduction of a hotel management course at the Kenya Polytechnic. The hotel management focus of this course was narrow and so there was still need for broader training and education to cover other areas in tourism. This led to the establishment of Kenya Utalii College (KUC) as a joint project between the Swiss and Kenyan governments in 1975. Kenya Utalii College offers courses for the accommodation, travel and tour operating sectors. The college admits both local students and students from 40 other countries (Sindiga, 1994).

KUC has not been able to meet all training needs due to its limited capacity. This has led to the proliferation of middle level institutions both public and private in the whole country (Mayaka, 2002). Unfortunately, the private provision seems to be so heavily commercialized that there have been calls for regulation and a harmonization of both curricula and qualifications (Sindiga, 1994; Mayaka, 1999; Mayaka & King, 2002). Efforts are underway to establish some mechanism for standardization and harmonization. Tourism training and education is the only major means of indigenization of the management and ownership of tourism businesses. It is argued, that such indigenization, will increase employment within the industry by reducing the level of foreign exchange leakage (Mayaka, 1999; Sindiga, 1999). Continuing training and education in tourism is lacking and is currently limited to refresher and management development courses normally run over 2-week periods at Kenya Utalii College.

This is a matter of great concern, especially since a vast majority of those working in the industry (including high-level managers) still remain untrained (Mayaka & King, 2002).

Tourism training and education at university level was initiated at Moi University in 1992 following a presidential committee report that decried a lack of conceptual and high-level management skills in the existing

training and education (Republic of Kenya, 1991). Other universities such as Maseno University, Kenyatta University, Nairobi University and now Egerton University have followed suit with introduction of either departments in tourism and related areas (for example, hospitality and institutional management) or tourism subjects within traditional discipline-based departments such as Geography, Business and History. The African Virtual University based at Kenyatta University also offers some tourism subjects via distance education while United States International University (USIU) has a department of hospitality and tourism within the Faculty of Business. Moi University is the foremost institution, having three specialized departments namely Tourism (policy and planning), Travel and Tour Operations Management and Hospitality and Hotel Management and now offers degrees up to PhD level. There is potential for establishing a school of tourism, travel and hospitality studies at Moi University.

Despite the apparent advancement in tourism training and education in Kenya, there are still big gaps in a number of areas. Tourism training and education is uncoordinated as there is still no one body that oversees all the activities. Each institution offers what it deems fit for the industry sometimes in a parochial way. In addition, it is a matter of concern that there may not be enough qualified staff in many of the institutions. Educate the educator programmes such as the one developed by the World Tourism Organization (WTO) (WTO/Surrey, 1996) would be of great benefit. A national tourism training and education strategy in line with national tourism policies has been proposed (Mayaka, 1999).

Tourism research is still lacking, partly due to lack of focus, motivation and even funding. There is room for collaboration of institutions of higher learning through research and exchanges in seminars and conferences. Similar initiatives elsewhere, for example the Council of Australian University Tourism and Hospitality Educators (CAUTHE), could provide models for the East African region (King, 1996). It is the author's view that institutions could mutually benefit through exchanges even on methods of delivery. The application of problem-based learning (PBL) which has taken root in MUDOT and its sister departments is, for example, unique in tourism-related studies. Its effectiveness and challenges could provide useful insights to other institutions through such exchanges.

In countries that attach a lot of importance to tourism, education is not only offered at colleges and universities, but in schools (especially at high school level) (King, 1996). This component is lacking in Kenya. Teaching tourism and hospitality in school would have an added advantage of increasing general public awareness, especially of its benefits and impacts and the role of the host community in the inbound tourism systems. This would also increase the prospects of students developing early interest in tourism as a field of study. The end result may be the attraction of the best brains into this field of study and, therefore, the enhancement of research and scholarship in tourism and hospitality. Coupled with this, is the need to extend basic education to include skills that are beyond numeracy and literacy skills (which are important but not the only ones relevant in modern society) as a means of capacity building (Esbin, 2002). Given the role that basic education plays in an individual's life, it is important and in the best interest of any nation to consider tourism-related skills in this formative pedagogic experience in its education system.

3. Research Methodology

This study used both primary and secondary sources of data. In this regard, secondary data was obtained from both published and unpublished materials such as books, journals and the internet. Primary data on the other hand was collected with the aid of questionnaires and interviews. The study recruited 10 middle level tourism and hospitality training colleges within Eldoret town. In the selected colleges, questionnaires were administered to students, teaching staff and the management through, simple random sampling. A total of 5 key informants were interviewed, who included 5 officials drawn from Catering and Tourism Development Levy Trustees in charge of standardization of tourism training and curriculum. The research participants were labeled as follows: OFF: 1, OFF: 2OFF: 5.

4. Findings

The study findings revealed that most colleges are in dire need of *learner-support* facilities. In this regard, when the respondents were asked to rate the lectures they had received in their respective colleges, 45% of the respondents, regarded them as good while 35% regarded them as being poor. On the aspect of the accessibility to books for their respective programmes, respondents expressed mixed opinions. This is evidenced in the premise that the response shared 50-50%- a response implying that students' access to books is below the requirements set out by CTDLT.

While describing the frequency with which students especially those taking *practical–oriented* programmes undertook practical lessons, majority of the respondents (55%) asserted that they had never undertaken practical lessons before while only 7.5% of the respondents admitted that they undertook practical lessons frequently.

When the respondents were asked to comment on the size of lecture halls in their respective colleges, majority of the respondents (42.5%) argued that the size of their lecture halls in their respective colleges was not sufficient, while only 17.5% represented the respondents who had the opinion that, the size of lecture halls was spacious.

On the administration of industrial attachment by their respective colleges, most of the respondents (37.5%) held mixed reactions as to whether or not the administration of industrial attachment was par excellence, with 30% representing the respondents who felt that the administration of industrial attachment was good.

On the issue of the suitability of the location of the colleges, a bigger percentage (57.5%) of the respondents indicated that the location of their colleges was unsuitable citing that the colleges were located on upper floors of most buildings in town which tended to be very noisy as a result of commercial operations in lower floors, while 42.5% of the respondents held the opinion that their colleges were suitably located.

When asked about the sufficiency of the furniture, 55% of the respondents asserted that they were insufficient whereas a mere 37.5% felt that the furniture was insufficient. While commenting on the sufficiency of lecturers in their respective colleges, half of the respondents admitted that they had sufficient lecturers whereas 42.5% of the respondents held a divergent opinion that they had insufficient lectures.

On the other hand the management of these colleges was equally interviewed. A majority of the respondents (40%) represented those who indicated that they offer accommodation training while the rest of the percentage was shared equally between those respondents who asserted that they offer food & beverage and commercial attractions training.

When asked about the learning methods, a total of 90% accounted for the respondents who said that lectures are the most used learning methods with only 10% representing those who said that they use demonstrations in their teaching.

On the same note, the research wanted to find out how hiring of staff is conducted in these colleges. A small number (30%) of the respondents said that hiring is based on specialized knowledge while most of the respondents (70%) indicated that hiring is based on the general knowledge of the field. This is premised on the fact that most colleges tend to cut cost in terms of paying for their human resources by hiring staff that have general knowledge; hence can multi-task in regard to teaching a diversity of subjects.

On the issue as to whether or not these colleges hold consultations with the industry practitioners, 30 % of the respondents asserted that they did so frequently, 30% of the respondents expressed mixed reactions while 30% of the respondents said that they did so less frequently. A small number (10%) of the respondents said that they never held consultations.

When asked whether or not there are quality control programmes in place, the majority (70%) of the respondents admitted that they had these programmes in place while (30%) said that they did not have such programmes. On the contrary, the majority of the respondents (70%) said that they did not have strategies for professional development with the minority (30%) of the respondents indicating that they had strategies in place for staff development.

It is evident that most of the colleges included in this study had insufficient learner support facilities.

The study results revealed that quality of education offered by Kenyan tertiary institutions is falling, threatening the country skills base. In this regard, the Kenya's Higher Education ministry has listed at least 395 institutions. Moreover, the ministry of Higher Education's vetting process identified 364 institutions as fully registered. An additional 100 colleges have recently been issued with provisional certificates of operations. In particular, Catering and Tourism Development Levy Trustees officials asserted that many of the courses for which thousands of students are enrolled have not been accredited and can therefore not be recognized as offering proper qualification to the various disciplines —putting thousands of careers on the line. This is evident in the following statement by one of the CTDLT officials:

"The need to publish the list was necessitated by concerns that unscrupulous persons may be taking advantage of Kenya's quest for education," (OFF: 1).

This statement was equally echoed by another respondent who asserted that:

"It's a big shame that there has been a lot of ineffectiveness in the oversight role of the Ministry of education. Huge resources have been wasted in these bogus colleges. The quality of higher education remains at stake if the Ministry is not quick to close bogus colleges and consistently keep check on the rest to ensure they meet the threshold on facilities and teaching force (OFF:2).

Moreover, the results revealed that pursuing a diploma or certificate programme in a college that has not been accredited is exposing parents, guardians and self-sponsored students to loss of millions of shillings in fees and other charges in pursuit of certificates that are of no value in the labour market. It also emerged that the main culprit in the crisis that is now threatening to shred the credibility of Kenya's education, including tourism training, are the private colleges, which are establishing departments and launching new courses before getting the mandatory accreditation from the Ministry.

More importantly, the Government of Kenya should put in place measures that would help boost the faltering quality of learning, made worse by unregistered colleges which have mushroomed in the country's main cities to cash in on a growing demand for higher education in Kenya. It should also be noted that poor quality education is eroding Kenya's skills base, adding a new challenge to the country's quest for high rate of economic growth and the realization of a newly industrialized status by 2030. Besides setting up unauthorized courses, the admissions race has also seen many of the colleges enroll students in accredited courses far past the recommended numbers, making it difficult for tutors to cope and ultimately diluting the quality of learning in the colleges. In addition, one of the respondents argued that:

"The establishment of the institutions must be consistent with the needs and policies of the country, the premises and accommodation must be suitable and adequate and the managers must be suitable to manage the institution," (OFF: 3).

Though, the study revealed that tertiary colleges have for the past five years been the option for thousands of Form Four graduates who miss admission in public universities. The high number of students seeking higher education has led to the mushrooming of institutions, some of which have been operating without proper accreditation. This is best described in the following statement by one of the respondents:

Of the 80,000 students who score the minimum grade for university entry annually, at least 50,000 miss university places, leaving them with only one option— to join the mushrooming tertiary colleges or drop out (OFF: 4).

The findings established that the vetting of colleges will guarantee parents and prospective applicants to opportunity of putting their money only into institutions that are registered with the Government and offer approved courses. This was further reiterated by one of the respondent's assertion:

"Parents who may have enrolled students in unregistered institutions should also make arrangements to relocate them to legally registered colleges," (OFF: 5).

5. Discussion

From the following findings, it is evident that the unprecedented growth of tourism and hospitality tertiary training colleges is compromising the quality of education. For instance, the study established that most of the colleges are ill-equipped to deliver courses in tourism training. This was evidenced in the insufficiency of classrooms, staff and lack of training hotels, restaurant and kitchen. Moreover, the quality of training is compromised with the lack of books for the students who are then compelled to just depend on the lecture notes only.

There is no doubt that there has been much thirst for education in Kenya and this is evidenced by the many colleges and private universities that are mushrooming all over the republic. The need for higher education has driven the private sector to start many institutions to bridge the gap that the government is unable to. It is clear that if these institutions did not do this there would be very many graduates from local high schools who have no education above their O level certificates as the top entries at the universities are all taken by the top students in the K.C.S.E. (Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education). Only about 55,200 of over 600,000 candidates who sit for their O levels are absorbed into the public and private universities with a portion being admitted into colleges and polytechnics that are run by the government and the private sector. Still there are a big number of students who are left with no additional skills. Most girls of those who are left with no learning to do especially in the rural Kenya end up getting married. The boys join the informal job sector like digging land, quarrying and other odd jobs to make ends meet. A third of all candidates qualify to join a tertiary institution but the problem is there are not enough openings to absorb these candidates. With this vacuum and with individuals who know of this problem, there has been mushrooming of colleges and other institutions claiming to offer very many courses especially computer related courses. Some of the most ridiculous courses offered are like "Internet and mail" which will take a student back by up to 1,500 shillings.

A few colleges have claimed to partner with other established government institutions to offer courses like nursing even though *the-said* institutes were still in negotiations on the partnership. Such kind of cases has even taken up to four years. This has meant that some students who may have taken up courses unaware of the situation have graduated with certificates that are not from the institution they were supposedly to have graduated from. The Kenyan government has been forced to accredit institutions after some parents complained that the students in certain institutions have a hard time getting jobs. This has brought to the attention of the government that in some of these institutions there is a low standard of education and therefore the graduands cannot perform in the workplaces. In many of these institutions, the curriculum offered does not address the present need for the job markets. There has been a crackdown and closure of some of these institutions and the government has blacklisted some of the institutions that are not accredited to parents. The government has also urged the parents and students to be wary and to cross check with the list of the accredited institutions to avoid such problems in the future. Still there is a lot that has to be done by both the government and the private sector as the government is overwhelmed by the number of students coming out of high schools and in need of advanced education.

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