

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGE IN KENYA'S HIGHER EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY OF KENYA METHODIST UNIVERSITY

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Employability of graduates in the East African Region has remained a major challenge and one that the higher education sector has not been keen to address. As the enrolment in higher education continues to grow, unemployment remains the biggest challenge facing young graduates. A recent study shows that over 50% of Kenyan graduates are not job-ready at graduation . Other countries in the East African region have higher rates.

This study therefore sought to answer the questions why the university graduates are not well prepared for work and what the higher education institutions should do to develop a holistic approach to learning that will build the competences required in the job market. This study is the result of a twelve-month project, which aimed to gain a clear understanding of how Kenya Methodist University is developing the competences required by the job market in its undergraduate students, determine the perception of the students in regards to the skills acquired and developed through their study and get feedback from the industry on the competences the students have developed. The study used a range of activities to gather data on students' work readiness as well as faculty capacities. Activities included seminars with the faculty, self-evaluation sessions with current students and an evaluation by the industry. Twenty five (25) faculty members were engaged in the seminars to explore the methods that have been applied in class and the outcomes from the courses taught. Thirty five students (35) were engaged in the self-evaluation program during which they were to determine what skills have been acquired through their study. Twelve (12) industrial players were engaged in the final workshop to evaluate the abilities of the students.

The study revealed that 35% of the faculty members give students only knowledge and therefore it is upon the students to decide how they apply the knowledge. 69% of the students are not able to articulate what skills have been acquired through normal class work and are not able to relate how their knowledge is applicable in the different activities they engage in outside class. The study concludes that, while the lecturers may have the knowledge in their fields of expertise, they lack the art, and to some extent the willingness, to transmit and develop the knowledge and the required competences for work in the students. The curricula do not adequately outline the expected learning

outcomes in terms of competences and therefore the lecturer does not design assessment activities that measure the needed competences.

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