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The role of government policies on students' inter-university transfer among selected private universities in Nairobi County, Kenya

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Abstract

This study assessed the influence of government policies on students' mobility in private universities in Nairobi County, Kenya. This study employed a descriptive quantitative survey design. This study targeted 26 registered private universities (including private university constituents where mobility rate records are too high) in Nairobi County, Kenya. The research sample size was 180 private university students and nine registrars. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22.0 was used to analyse quantitative data. Descriptive analysis, inferential statistics, and regression analysis were used to analyse the findings. Descriptive statistics such as standard deviation, percentages, and mean scores were computed appropriately. Binary logistic regression analysis was adopted to find out the extent of the effect on the dependent variables of independent variables. The study concluded that government policies significantly influence the mobility of students in private universities in Nairobi County in Kenya. The Government agencies through the Commission for University Education (CUE), Ministry of Education (MOE), Kenya Universities and Colleges Placement Service (KUCCPS), and Higher Education Loans Board (HELB) that are concerned with the welfare of students and need to control the alarming cases of student mobility should take measures to review the existing policies that guide learning in institutions of higher education and introduce systematic measures that can enhance student engagement while undertaking their studies.

Key words: Commission, corporate transfer, government policy, student mobility, university.



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INTRODUCTION

In Kenya, studies on internal mobility have been insufficient. Paton (2014) indicated that Kenya has witnessed a substantial influx of students from neighbouring countries, particularly from Rwanda, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Southern Sudan. This can be attributed to the establishment of the Inter-University Council for East Africa (IUCEA), a vehicle designed to build a unified university system in East Africa. This has enabled student's mobility to easily access learning and facilitates (CUE, 2014).

University education in Kenya is regulated by the Commission for University Education (CUE), and hence the standards of learning facilities, qualification of lecturers, learning environment, students' recreation facilities, structures of governance, accreditation of academic programmes, library resources and others are closely monitored in both private and public universities (CUE, 2016). The Commission for University Education plays a regulatory role and puts appropriate measures that guide the higher education sector in Kenya. The commission facilitates the process of ensuring quality education and sets the minimum standards and guidelines for university education. In that respect, the Ministry of Education (MoE) expects conducive learning in all public and private universities in Kenya, and hence, less movement of students from one university to another.

Despite efforts to standardise education through CUE and placement process through KUCCPS in all universities, the country has witnessed a considerable number of government and privately sponsored students preferring to transfer from one university to another. This kind of student mobility seems to suggest that there exist undisclosed preferences among students in their choice of universities, which usually trigger the need to transfer. Therefore, this study set out to examine the effect of government policies on students' mobility in private universities in Nairobi County, Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Kwon (2013), university internationalisation has become a key concern for rich and developing nations during the past few decades. The

higher education sector in South Korea, a nation that is developing quickly, has seen a significant shift. The population of incoming international students enrolling in Korean universities has increased drastically since 2005, according to available data, partly as a result of the South Korean government's higher education plan and economic development stages. Though the population of international students enrolling in Korean universities is relatively modest in comparison with other Western and Asian countries, it is considerable. In response to these views, the Korean government's recent regulations and Korean universities' efforts to promote internationalise.

In his study on the financial implications of foreign students' mobility in the globalisation process, Levent (2016) stated that many nations across the globe are making huge economic commitments in order to become an international student attraction. On the other hand, survival in the worldwide education market is contingent on certain parameters being met. In particular, all aspects related to overseas schooling, such as tuition rates, living expenditures, foreign language expertise, educational quality, visa processes, lodging, and employment chances, must be considered. In other words, nations that wish to expand the foreign student population must update their economic policies and develop ideal steps in response to current changes.

In the first decade of the twenty-first century, a number of nations attracted international student to enrol in their education systems through numerous programmes and policies. According to Geddie (2015), in his study on governance policies on mobilities in the quest for talent, most governments endeavoured to raise the number of foreign students and profit associated with their education through comparative policy tools on their higher education sectors and immigration laws. With reference to the international students' policies in Canada and the UK (between the years 2000 and 2010), the study noted a competitive process where students were attracted to migrate to foreign countries for higher education. International student mobility was found to be an initiative to move from one geographical location to another in search of higher education.

According to Farrugia and Bhandari (2020), the number of international students who enrol in higher education in foreign countries has risen significantly in the last

three decades (to 3.5 million in 2016, up from 0.8 million in 1975). The reason for this increase can be attributed to several factors, including an increase in demand for university education, a search for prestigious institutions, international policies that encourage student mobility across countries, and lower costs of international transportation and labour mobility across countries. Furthermore, most governments and institutions have increased their interest in promoting higher education (even across countries). Countries stand to raise revenue through international students. Through international student mobility, some countries aim to increase their pool of skilled labour.

On the issue of changing mobilities, policy concerns, and new initiatives, other governments have far more recently entered the student market, despite the fact that Western nations have always attracted a sizable number of international students (Geddie, 2015). China and Russia are two examples, each of which registered 10 per cent and 6 per cent of the world's international students in 2017. The newest players in international student mobility mark a shift away from traditional Western host governments that accept students from all around the world to include countries that mostly draw from regional bases. In comparison to Russian students, who come from seven of the top ten countries of origin, six of the top ten countries of origin for Chinese students are in Asia. These regional mobility patterns are impacted by things like physical proximity, historical relationships, and cultural affinities, as well as concerted national or regional initiatives to forge connections through student movement. The key variables that affect the flow of international students are the desire to obtain employable skills in a global context, quality, and capacity. Compared to Russian students, who come from seven of the top ten countries of origin, six of the top ten countries of origin for Chinese students are in Asia (Farrugia & Bhandari, 2020).

Physical proximity, historical connections, cultural affinity, as well as coordinated national or regional efforts to create interconnections through student mobility all have an impact on these regional mobility patterns. These regional mobility patterns are influenced by factors including physical closeness, historical links, and cultural affinities, as well as coordinated national or regional attempts to develop linkages through student mobility. The desire to acquire employable skills in a global environment, quality, and capacity are the main factors that influence the flow of international students. According to the article, policies to increase student mobility come in a variety of shapes and sizes, from those of sending countries that financially sponsor their students to study abroad to those of host countries that set data to calculate to continue increasing the number of international students in their country, to bilateral initiatives that seek to forge closer ties between nations (British Council & DAAD, 2014; Teichler, 2011). Government engagement in student exchange has a variety of purposes, such as fostering cultural diplomacy (soft power), enhancing a nation's human capital and innovative potential, and offering development assistance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Influence of Government Policy on Students' Mobility in Private Universities

This study sought to assess the influence of government policies on students' mobility in private universities in Nairobi County in Kenya. A null hypothesis, "Government policies do not significantly influence student's mobility in private universities in Nairobi County in Kenya," was formulated and tested using binary logistic regression.

Table 1: Government Policies

Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA	Total	Mean	Std. Dev.
1. I find government policies on inter-university transfers flexible	5 (3)	17 (10.3)	37 (22.4)	76 (46.1)	30 (18.2)	165 (100)	3.66	0.99

2. The process of student transfer through KUCCPS at the university is flexible	5 (3)	9 (5.5)	21 (12.7)	95 (57.6)	35 (21.2)	165 (100)	3.88	0.91
3. The government policies on credit transfers are conducive	1 (0.6)	5 (3)	36 (21.8)	97 (58.8)	26 (15.8)	165 (100)	3.86	0.73
4. The government policy on transfer has been communicated effectively	1 (0.6)	19 (11.5)	27 (16.4)	74 (44.8)	44 (26.7)	165 (100)	3.85	0.96
Overall							3.82	0.79

The majority of the student respondents agreed with the statement that they find government policies on inter-university transfers flexible. Those who agreed with the statement comprised a cumulative of 64.3 per cent, with 46.1 per cent agreeing and an additional 18.2 per cent strongly agreeing. A cumulative of 13.3 per cent of the respondents disagreed with the statement. About 22.4 per cent were undecided. On a scale of 1-5, an average student rating of the statement that they find government policies on inter-university transfers as flexible was 3.66 with a standard deviation of 0.99.

The majority of the student respondents agreed with the statement that the process of student transfer through KUCCPS at the university is flexible. Those who agreed with the statement comprised a cumulative of 78.8 per cent, with 57.6 per cent agreeing and an additional 21.2 per cent strongly agreeing. A cumulative of 8.5 per cent of the respondents disagreed with the statement. About 12.7 per cent were NEUTRAL. On a scale of 1-5, the average student rating of the statement that the process of student transfer through KUCCPS at the university is flexible was 3.88, with a standard deviation of 0.91.

The majority of the student respondents agreed with the statement that the government policies on credit

transfers are conducive. Those who agreed with the statement comprised a cumulative of 74.6 per cent, with 58.8 per cent agreeing and an additional 15.8 per cent strongly agreeing. The respondents who disagreed with the statement were 3.6 per cent. About 21.8 per cent were neutral. On a scale of 1-5, the average student rating of the statement that the government policies on credit transfers are conducive was 3.86, with a standard deviation of 0.73.

The majority of the student respondents agreed with the statement that the government policy on transfer has been communicated effectively. Those who agreed with the statement comprised a cumulative of 71.5 per cent, with 44.8 per cent agreeing and an additional 26.7 per cent strongly agreeing. A cumulative of 12.1 per cent of the respondents disagreed with the statement. About 16.4 per cent were neutral. On a scale of 1 - 5, the average student rating of the statement that the government policy on transfer has been communicated effectively was 3.85, with a standard deviation of 0.96.

Most of the respondent's scores on government policies on students' mobility ranged between 4-5 (54.5%) and 3-3.99 (37.0%), as summarised in Table 2.

Table 2: Summary of Rating of Government Policies on Students' Mobility

Scores	Frequency	Percentage
1-1.99	5	3.0%
2-2.99	9	5.5%
3-3.99	61	37.0%

4-5.00	90	54.5%
Total	165	100.0%

Note: Upper-class limit not included

The overall students' rating of government policies on students' mobility (on a scale of 1–5) was a mean of 3.82 with a standard deviation of 0.79.

This study sought to establish if there was a significant difference in the students' perception of government policy (between those willing to transfer and those not willing), and analysis was done using an independent samples t-test. The results are summarised in Table 3.

Table 3: T-test Results for the Comparison of Students' Perception of Government Policy between those Willing and those not Willing to Transfer

Group	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
No	131	3.956	0.061	0.699	3.835	4.077
Yes	34	3.272	0.155	0.901	2.958	3.586
Combined	165	3.815	0.062	0.792	3.693	3.937

Note: Mean difference = 0.684; Standard error = 0.143; P-value = 0.000; t = 4.774; df = 163

Table 4 shows the influence of government policies on students' mobility in private universities.

Table 4: Influence of Government Policy on Students' Mobility in Private Universities

Willingness to transfer	Coef.	Std. Err.	z	P>z	[95% Conf. Interval]	
Government policy	-1.105	0.275	-4.020	0.000	-1.644	-0.566
_cons	2.682	0.994	2.700	0.007	0.735	4.630

Log likelihood = -74.14; LR chi2 (1) = 19.60; Prob > chi2 = 0.000; Pseudo R2 = 0.117

The log-likelihood for the fitted model (-74.14) and the likelihood ratio chi-square value of 19.60 (Prob> chi2 = 0.000) indicate that the model parameters (the independent variable and the constant) are jointly significant at 5 per cent. The Pseudo R2 of 0.117 imply that about 11.7 per cent of the student's willingness to transfer from one private university to another could be attributed to government policies (the independent variable). Pseudo R2 of 0.117 met the statistical threshold, confirming that the willingness to transfer from one private university to another among the sampled students was well attributed to government policies (intervening variable). The coefficient of government policies (-1.105) was statistically significant at a 5 per cent level. This implies that the null hypothesis, "Government policies do not significantly influence student's mobility in private universities in Nairobi County in Kenya," was rejected.

Therefore, government policies significantly influence student's mobility in private universities in Nairobi County in Kenya.

One registrar from a privately-sponsored private university in Nairobi explained:

The Kenya Universities and Colleges Central Placement Service (KUCCPS) supports all students who, for various reasons, wish to transfer from one institution to another. KUCCPS portal receives inter-institutional transfer applications at designated times of the year. Inter-institutional transfer is a student placement process that

allows learners to get admitted to institutions of their choice through KUCCPS. The transfer is normally justified by reasons such as health, preference and nature of course. The application is normally submitted online through the KUCCPS online portal. A transfer application cannot be successful if the applicant does not qualify for

the applied course. Further, a transfer application cannot be completed without the endorsement of the receiving and the releasing institutions.

The mean difference in the scores on students' perception of government policy (between those willing to transfer and those not willing) was computed as 0.684. The mean difference is depicted in Figure 1.

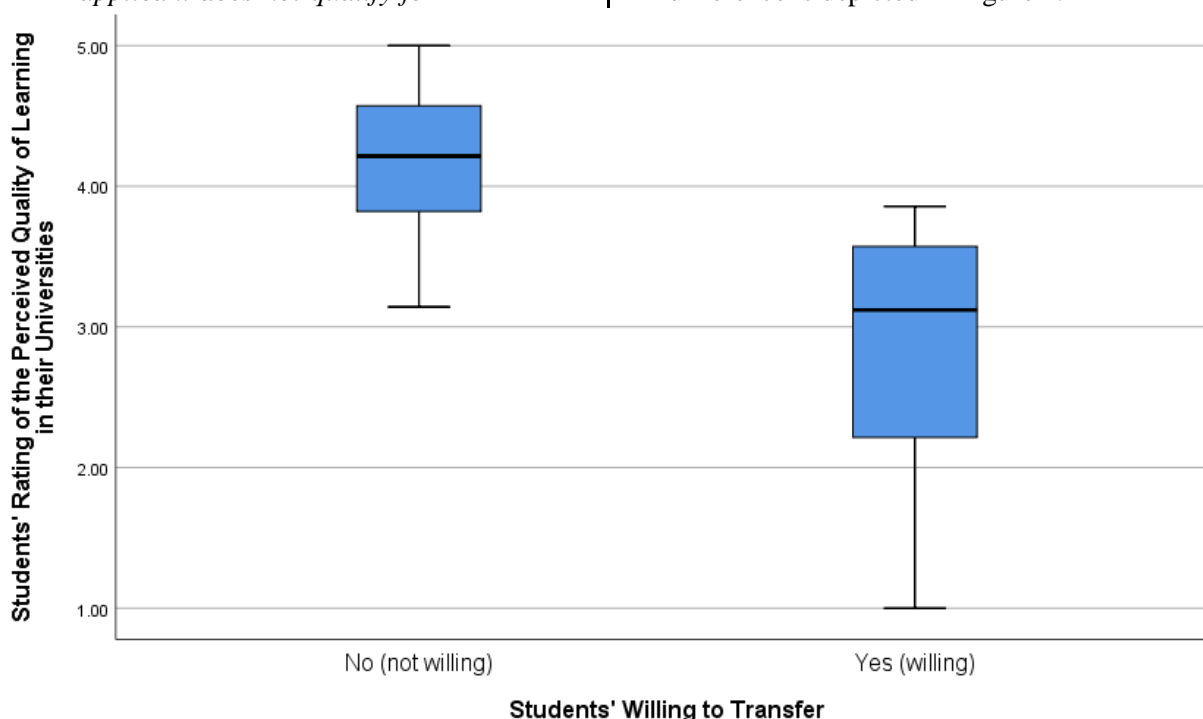


Figure 1. Comparison of Students' Perceptions of Government Policy between those Willing and those not Willing to Transfer

The calculated t-value of 4.774 at 163 degrees of freedom indicates that the mean difference was statistically significant at a 5 per cent level ($p < 0.05$). This implies that government policy significantly influences student mobility in private universities in Nairobi, Kenya.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that government policies significantly influence students' mobility in private universities in Nairobi County in Kenya. The

Government agencies through the Higher Education Loans Board (HELB), Kenya Universities and Colleges Placement Service (KUCCPS), Commission for University Education (CUE) and Ministry of Education (MOE) that are concerned with the welfare of students and need to control the alarming cases of student mobility should take measures to review the existing policies that guide learning in institutions of higher education and introduce systematic measures that can enhance student engagement while undertaking their studies.

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