

Quality Management at the Faculty of Environmental Studies at Chepkoilel University College, Kenya

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Abstract

This paper discusses quality management in the Faculty of Environmental Studies at Chepkoilel University College with specific emphasize on the crucial role of a Head of Department in initiating, maintaining and achieving quality outputs in all areas. This paper discusses quality management at the Faculty and key factors to consider to improve quality management in the Department of Applied Environmental Social Sciences. The roles, duties and responsibilities of a Head of Department and the Quality Assurance Director are presented and discussed. The paper further discusses the challenges and opportunities for the Head of Department and Dean of Faculty that enhance quality management of academic programmes, procedures and students.

Keywords: Research funding, Staff development, Higher education challenges, Quality assurance.

1 Introduction

Chepkoilel University College is a constituent college of Moi University established by Kenya Gazette Legal Notice number 125 of 13th August 2010. The College is semi- autonomous in most administrative and academic activities except in matters of examinations and conferment of degrees. Prior to elevation, Chepkoilel has been a Campus of Moi University specializing in science based subjects since 1988. Currently it has a student population of 8,000 pursuing bachelors and postgraduate studies in these schools: agriculture and biotechnology,

business and management sciences, education, environment, engineering, natural resource management and science.

Quality in higher education is perceived as consisting of a synthesis of conformity, adaptability and continuous improvement. Quality is often defined as “fitness for purpose” and “standard-based”. The Commission for Higher Education (CHE) uses both approaches in its quality assurance processes. On the other hand terms related to the concept of quality are: assurance, control, assessment and audit. Quality assurance is the mechanism put in place to guarantee quality education (CHE 2008). Quality is also seen as value for money. This concept focuses on efficiency and effectiveness of a programme by measuring outputs against inputs. Something is considered to have quality when it meets the expectations of the consumers (customer satisfaction) (Cheserek, 2010).

Total Quality Management (TQM) to higher education in general and consideration of the contextual and power relations issues associated with implementation of TQM, a model for integrating its principles into the faculty recruitment, identification and selection process will be outlined. This model relates the role of vision, mission, planning and organizational design with quality concepts (understanding a system and systems theory, leadership, empowerment, client/constituent satisfaction, team building, and continuous process improvement). Drawing upon Marchese and Lawrence’s (1987) work wherein they identified eight critical processes in the selection of faculty, one critical process – “Defining the job” – is specifically analyzed using the continuous improvement methodology as an example of the specific application of TQM techniques to higher education decision making. The model and this example provide educational leaders with an enhanced framework within which they can effectively analyze and evaluate faculty selection processes, criteria for selection, and relevant contextual issues that will result in the identification and selection of the best qualified faculty available.

The objective of the paper is to integrate the TQM model and its principles in faculty management at Chepkoilel university college (CUC). This will be understood by first looking at the college vision that is ‘to be a leading institution in the provision of cutting edge research, teaching, consultancy and outreach.’ The mission is ‘to develop high quality graduates and professionals in education, training, research, consultancy and outreach for national and international clientele.’ The core values are: leadership and responsibility, transparency and in-

tegrity, service delivery and customer satisfaction, gender equity and responsiveness, visibility and competitiveness. The strategic objectives include: excellence in teaching, research, consultancy and outreach; advance in science, agriculture and technology for sustainable development; train and develop informed practical, innovative and self reliant graduates; nurture and uphold corporate social responsibility; source and optimize the use of resources for education and training to achieve set goals.

2 Faculty Management at Chepkoilel University College

Chepkoilel University College is headed by the Principal and two deputies who manage the day to day activities assisted by a management committee. The principal is the chief executive with overall responsibility in directing, organizing, administration and academic programmes. He is assisted by the Vice Chancellor and management board. The college Council consisting of nine (9) members appointed by the Minister are responsible for policy and hiring senior university college staff; whereas the Chancellor awards degrees. The two deputy principals are in charge of (1) administration, planning and finance and (2) academic and student affairs. Chepkoilel University College Organisation Chart in 2012 is shown on Fig 1 below, with bolded areas to indicate area of focus in this paper. The college management board consists of the principal, two deputies, finance officer and the two registrars' in-charge of academics and administration. The college academic board consist of the following: professors, management, deans and directors, heads of teaching departments, librarian, dean of students and two student representatives.

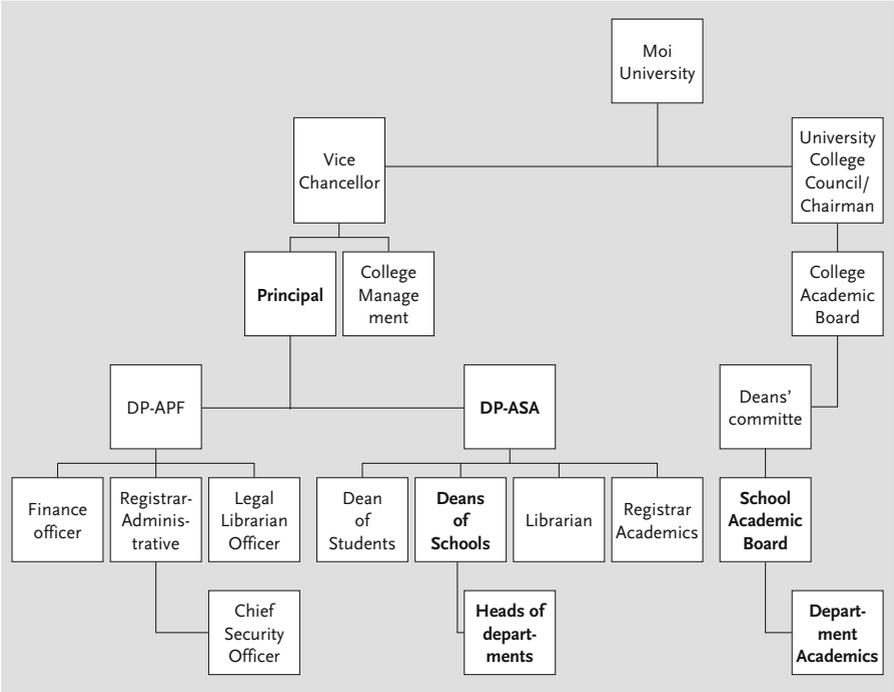


Figure 1: Chepkoilel University College Organogram

3 Faculty of Environmental Studies

The School of Environmental Studies was established in 1990, due to the rising global interest in environmental concerns particularly in pollution, human settlements, urbanisation, agriculture and industrial development. The School of Environmental Studies (SES) has four departments namely: applied environmental social sciences (AESS), environmental biology and health (EBH), environmental earth sciences (EES) and environmental monitoring, planning and management (EMPM). These departments offer two bachelor’s degrees in environmental science (Arts and Science). There are seven post graduate programmes at master’s and PhD, namely environmental biological sciences, health, human ecology, law, economics, planning and management, information systems and physical sciences. The school has over twenty teaching staff all with PhDs in their respective fields. The student population is approximately 600. The leader of the school is the Dean and Heads of Departments (HoD). The decision making boards are academic

board and management. A similar structure is replicated at the department with department boards and management. The links are shown in Fig 2.

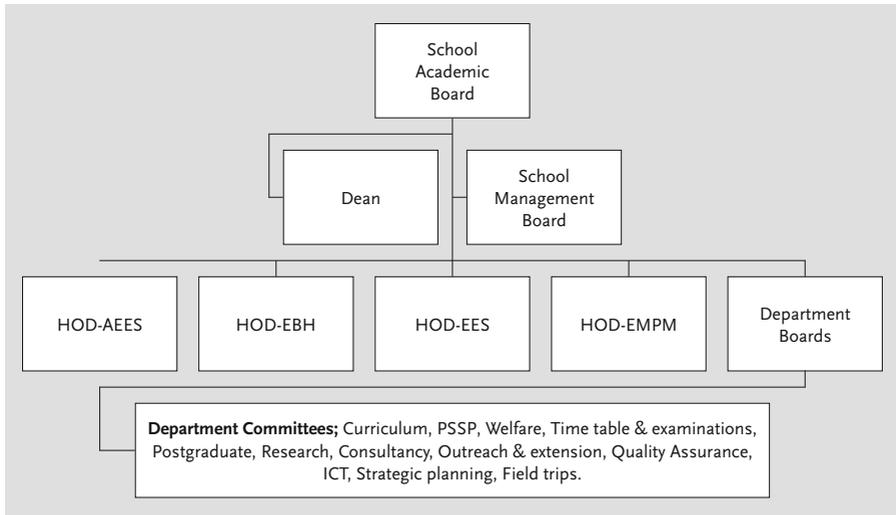


Figure 2: Faculty of Environment Organisation Chart

4 Roles and Responsibilities of Heads of Departments

The roles and responsibilities of a Head of Academic Department (HoD) are vast as shown in Fig 3. According to the CUC statues 2012, HoDs are competitively recruited from among internal staff members at the level of senior lecturer. Qualified persons will apply, undergo interviews and be appointed for a one term of four years non-renewable. This will be done in cognisance of Kenya’s constitutional spirit on gender rule and leadership and integrity. The CUC is in the process of developing terms and service of HoDs, but uses Moi University to avoid a vacuum in leadership. We hope the terms will clearly stipulate and streamline all duties and responsibilities of HoDs.

The common responsibilities of Heads of Academic Departments include;

- a) Admissions – receive admissions from Joint Admissions Board (JAB) – undergraduate, process “Privately Sponsored Students Programme” (PSSP) un-

- dergraduate, process masters and PhD applications, conduct interviews for PhDs
- b) Teaching – course allocation to teaching staff, teach mandatory one course per semester and supervise teaching for all courses in a semester both undergraduate and post-graduate.
 - c) Examinations – receive draft examination papers, coordinate department moderation, liaise with external examiner for external moderation and submit final examination papers to officer in-charge. During examination time the HoD is the chief invigilator making sure all examinations are invigilated and scripts collected and stored according to university approved examination regulations 2009. Later coordinate marking and collating marks for each course (individual marks) and for all students (consolidated marks) in the department. At the end of each academic year, all student results are discussed with department examinations board and forward to faculty examination board for discussion. Immediately the faculty board has discussed results, it will give verdict to all students subject to approval by the college academic board. The university senate has the final verdict for all examination results for undergraduate and post-graduate students.
 - d) Consultancy – co-ordinate individual and department consultancy activities and collaboration.
 - e) Research – co-ordinate students', staff and other inter-disciplinary/collaborative research activities.
 - f) Staff development – receive applications, constitute a short-listing committee and make recommendations for promotion and training.
 - g) Curriculum review and development – coordinate review of existing curriculum every four years and develop new curriculum.
 - h) Staff welfare – promote teaching and non- teaching staff welfare including annual leave, compassionate leave, leave of absence, sabbatical.
 - i) Postgraduate supervision – allocates supervisors for post graduate students; recommend thesis internal and external examiners.
 - j) Planning and budgeting – prepare annual and quarterly activities and budgets for the department.
 - k) Procurement of goods – initiates the procurement of department equipments, stationery, teaching materials, staff/student computers and ICT.
 - l) Quality assurance – in all processes at the department, using statutes, rules, regulations and policy direction. This means HoDs should be conversant with legal documents, policies and well as rules and regulations governing all sectors of activities. The challenge is availability of all documents for use

at department. It is therefore prudent that the Director of QA provides all reference documents to all academic departments to ease adaptability and compliance.

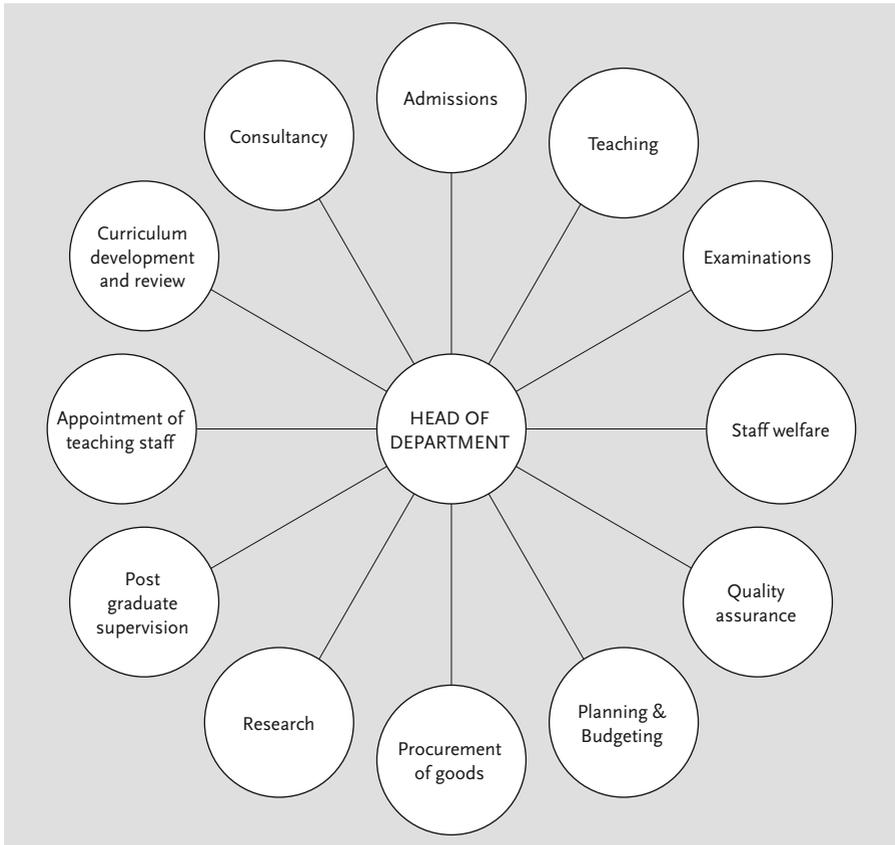


Figure 3: Roles of a Head of Department

A major short coming of faculty management at the department is the lack of a structured system of staff development. My experience from German Universities is that each department is headed by a Professor, with several senior lecturers and lecturers below. The Professor is able to access funding from the central government research fund and other sources to build capacity for their staff and students, of whom they have PhD and masters in the same department. We would

like to try this system in the department of applied environmental social sciences and evaluate its effects on quality management of curriculum and staff development. We would require facilitation and support from the College management and other well wishers to achieve the structure over-haul. The structure will be as shown on Fig 4.

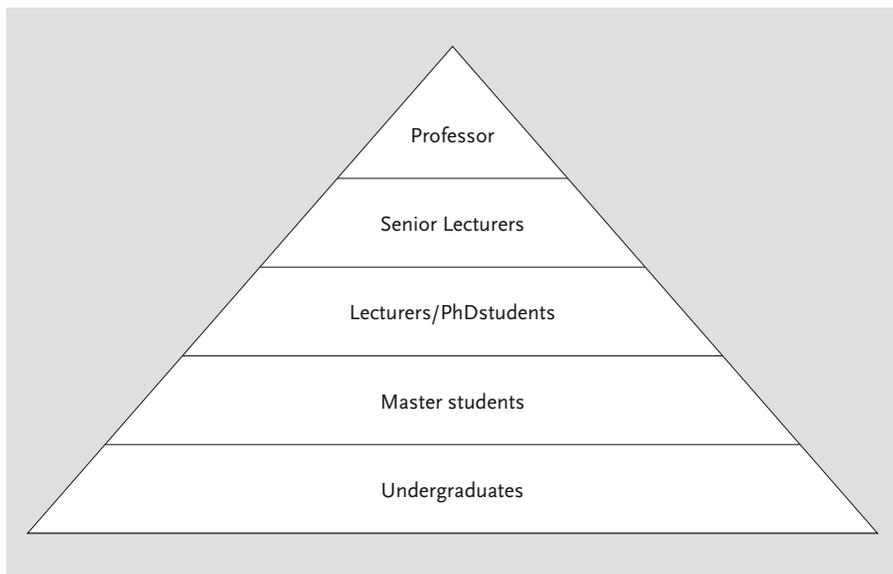


Figure 4: Proposed Department academic structure

The department of Applied Environmental Social Sciences (AESS) will develop committees in the twelve (12) areas of concern, each headed by a Chairperson who will be responsible to the HoD. Each Chairperson of committee will develop strategic objectives and a plan of action in line with department goals and will be facilitated using AESS department funds. Each committee will organise their independent meeting to discuss their action plan and report to department meeting on a quarterly basis. At the end of each academic year, the performance of all committees will be assessed and evaluated on outcome and quality assurance basis. The leading committee in terms of achievement will be rewarded. The overall objective of AESS department will be to improve student enrolment, maintain quality management, customer satisfaction and produce world class graduands who can work anywhere in the world.

5 Directorate of Quality Assurance

Recently the college appointed a Directorate for quality assurance. Though this is the right direction for managing quality in all sectors of the CUC, a lot needs to be done to comply with CHE rules and regulations for internal and external evaluation. Critical in this area is quality in curriculum development, student admissions and examinations processing. Fortunate for the Director, is that some staff already are trained in quality management systems (QMS), organised by Moi university in 2010. The Director should identify these staff to form his committee and streamline quality at the department level.

The Directorate should compile quality assurance (QA) regulations for each of the HoD's responsibilities to provide a level ground all departments. This is an uphill task, but management needs to prioritise. However to make the process easily achievable, the director QA should liaise with respective HoDs to develop QMS drafts based on Moi University procedures 2009. The quality assurance in the areas of students (admissions and examination), infrastructure, administration/support services, teaching staff, suppliers and graduands is mandatory. QA at the faculty is a process; with inputs, processing, outputs as shown in Fig 5.

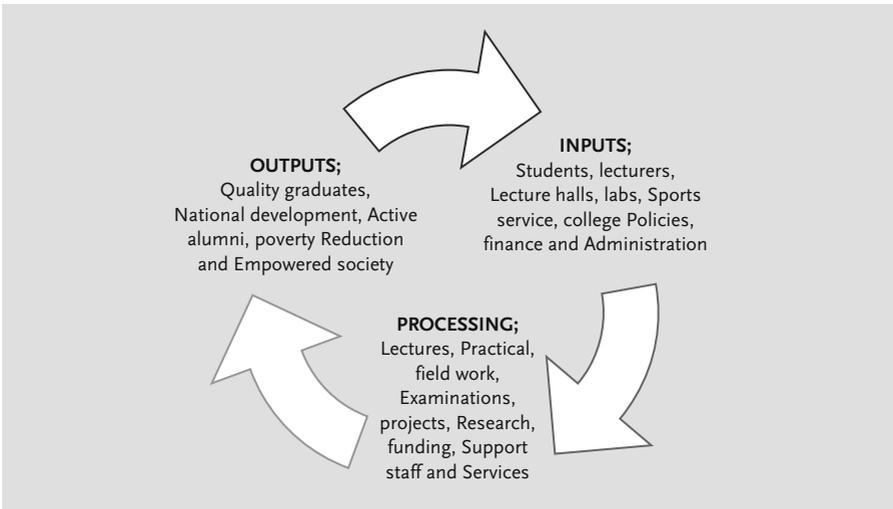


Figure 5: Proposed Department academic structure

6 Challenges and Opportunities for Faculty Quality Management

6.1 Challenges in Faculty management

- 6.1.1 Training – lack of priority in staff development both teaching and non-teaching.
- 6.1.2 Seminars – Induction for HoDs, Deans, Directors, Committee members and Chairpersons of Committees. Immediately you are appointment to these offices, one is left to meander into their duties, responsibilities and expected output. Thus there exists a lack of harmony in achieving the institutions goals and objectives.
- 6.1.3 Supervision – the period it takes to graduate masters and PhD students is too long, due to delays in processing proposals and thesis. The crucial delay is between data collection, analysis and thesis writing. This problem arises due to lack of focus from the student.
- 6.1.4 Funding – funding for developing new curricula; writing research proposals; attending conferences and workshops; journal publications and professional training (such as IT, management, leadership etc).
- 6.1.5 Incentives – department staff requires incentives such as Christmas holiday, shows and fairs, vacation/leave, team building and bonding sessions, annual and quarter lunches. This will boost their need to belong and improve productivity. Some staff work extra-hard to meet institution goals and yet there is no award to appreciate them. Some staff have patents, others have won national and global awards, whereas other have received Presidential commendations. Yet none gets recognition from the College.
- 6.1.6 Research – research funds are currently disbursed through the National Council for Science and Technology (NCST). Kenya has set aside 0.05 % of GDP as research funds that are transferred to NCST for disbursing to researchers. The challenge is that at NCST, scientist from public and private universities compete for funding. Scientists are required to write proposals that and conduct multi-disciplinary and multi-institutional research. This becomes an obstacle for scientists who are interested in pure or applied sciences research. The funding from government is insufficient due to high demand from scholars, only about ten (10) proposals are funded each year ranging from Kshs 3–15 million only. The fund does not support equipments; hence researchers are required to use university laboratories and other equipments.

6.1.7 Infrastructure – infrastructure development at the university college should be upgraded. The student population rose from 3,500 in 2009 to 8,000 in 2012, with little investment on laboratories, lecture rooms, staff offices and environmental management. As a result the lecture rooms are congested and labs are overcrowded. Lack of conducive work environment for lecturers’ leads to stress and low productivity. Thus there is the need to expand on existing infrastructure for effective and quality teaching for students

6.2 Opportunities for Faculty quality management

- 6.2.1 Develop capacity of Deans and HoDs in management and resource mobilization and not resource utilization. Currently each one of them is busy spending and not attracting funds. This can be achieved by facilitating short courses on programmes sales and marketing; customer care and satisfaction, corporate management and strategic leadership.
- 6.2.2 Professional training for teaching and non- teaching staff at fifty percent cost in and outside the university. Any staff who is interested in improving their performance of tasks should be facilitated and the convenience of both parties. This will boost the general staff morale and productivity.
- 6.2.3 There is need to establish stringent measures to ensure post graduate student’s progress is closely monitored to avoid delays. The department should develop monitoring tools to ensure that postgraduate students complete their programmes on time. Students and supervisors should be provided adequate assistance to write fundable proposals by local and international grants giving institutions.
- 6.2.4 Incentives should be provided for academic staff who graduated masters and PhD students, those who publish articles and those who bring research funds to the university. The University of Fort Hare in Republic of South Africa (RSA), for example pays 6,000 R for one PhD, 4,000 R (R=Rand) for one Master and similar amount for every publication. As a result of these incentives, they produce the highest number of PhD students and highest number of publications in South Africa. Fort Hare University is ranked highly due to this fact. Most universities in RSA, support their staff in proposal development, paper presentations at conferences and publication processes. This is a good incentive to enable academic staff development and to promote the faculty both nationally and globally.

- 6.2.5 Annual or quarterly organised brainstorming sessions and team-building activities have been proved to improve attitudes and motivate workers to be productive. Team building activities are the most effective ways to reduce stress, ensure group focus, improve attitudes and get your group to learn how to work together towards achieving common goals and maintain relevance and competitive edge in a dynamic market.
- 6.2.6 Research funding is crucial to the development of new theories, technology, solutions to current problems and spur national development. Research funding at the national level should be increased to 5 % of GDP and disbursed directly to academic departments in institutions of higher learning. The NCST should be converted to National Research Fund (NRF) which will fund all quality proposals on science, technology and innovations. Chepkoilel University College should put aside 3 % of its total income for research to promote staff PhD training, publications and promotions.

7 Conclusion

Faculty quality management at a university college is complex and multi-disciplinary. It needs the efforts of Head of Department, Dean, management, Council and student leaders to improve and keep improving. The HoD is key to achieving quality management of any faculty in the college, hence the need to appoint capable, willing to learn and dynamic academic staff to head these important harm of the university.

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