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## INTERNATIONAL & COMPARATIVE EDUCATION | RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Policies of access and quality of higher education in China and Kenya: A comparative study

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**Abstract:** This paper traces the development and current situations of higher education in China and Kenya. This paper calls for rethinking on how to address increasing demand for access and quality through creating a conducive environment for learning and researching for both students and faculties. The paper presents a comparative study where China has been used as an example of a country that experienced rapid growth in access to higher education and economy in the last two decades. As the higher education system in Kenya faces challenges of increased demand with limited spaces coupled with poor policies and lack of resources, China's higher education has been a success story of external policies, increased demand, funding and access to higher education. The trends imply that if the Kenyan Government can borrow a leaf from Chinese higher education, then leaders can better understand challenges and provide solutions to improve the higher education system in Kenya. A conceptual framework was drawn from educational policies in China to explain how Kenya can learn and address its own challenges of higher education. A documentary review method was used to collect data. Recommendations discussed in this paper provide important insights to policy-makers and educators in Kenya on how to reform higher education system to meet the current challenges.

**Subjects:** Arts; Education; Social Sciences

**Keywords:** access; quality; challenges; lessons

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

J. Muthiani Malechwanzzi is a lecturer at Coast Institute of Technology, Kenya. He is currently pursuing doctoral studies at Huazhong University of Science and Technology, China. His research article is part of doctoral research studies which aim to illustrate borrowing and lending policies of accessibility and quality in higher education to meet the current challenges.

### PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

The ever-growing demand for higher education today has left many countries in the world with a bunch of challenges on how to sustain access while maintaining quality. The Chinese government has invested little in higher education as a percentage of its gross domestic production than Kenya. However, higher education participation rate is far much higher in China than in Kenya. What is the Chinese secret? China's higher education has been a successful story of external policies, increase in demand, access and funding. This article explores policies of access and quality in institutions of higher learning. We further identified challenges faced by higher education in China and Kenya. China taking a lead role in development of higher education can serve as an example to other developing countries like Kenya that are gearing towards the same course. Understanding these policies can provide an important insight to policy-makers and educators on how to reform higher education system to meet the current challenges.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Background of the study

Historically, higher education in the world was associated with elitism and exclusion to certain class of individuals. Even at present, in some parts of the world, access to higher education has remained a privilege left for a few people (Nogueira & Jaana, 2013). In the advent of twenty-first century development arena, higher education has assumed unprecedented importance both internationally and nationally due to its role in educating people for knowledge and global economy. However, it is for this reason that in many countries, access to higher education has increased considerably. Common wealth of learning estimates that 150 million students will be enrolled in the post-secondary education by 2020 (Altbach & Peterson, 1999). With this tremendous growth, many governments and institutions of higher learning have experienced many challenges to sustain.

These global issues in relation to accessing higher education, however, are diverse and a typical example is China and Kenya. In 1991, the Gross Enrolment Rate for the two countries was approximated at 3%. However, by 2015, China had reached 40% while Kenya was still staggering at about 10%. Looking beyond the Gross Enrolment Rate, it is important to examine higher education in the two countries in relation to private and public sectors. In China, most students attend public universities (90%), while in Kenya, it is approximately 80%. It is fascinating to find out that China has a much higher Gross Enrolment Rate than Kenya with most students in the public sector; yet, its investment in education as a percentage of GDP is lower than that of Kenya (4% for China and 6% for Kenya by 2015).

What factors led China and Kenya to have a differing state of affairs regarding access to higher education? To answer this question, it is necessary to observe the history of higher education in both countries. This study examines the history and recent issues of higher education in China and Kenya in regard to access. Access will be analysed in all its complexities which includes: affordability and equity. This study will also discuss issues associated with access such as providing quality higher education to students and creating favourable conditions for them to graduate successful. Before describing the objectives of this study, it is of necessity to explain why the present researcher choose to conduct a comparative study of China and Kenya, given that the two countries have very little to share in common.

### 1.2. Statement of the problem

Institutions of higher learning have taken a critical role in training the society throughout centuries by teaching professionals in various fields of knowledge. The relevance of these institutions has been re-energized at present, especially with the emergence of globalization. Educating individuals is educating the society; in fact, it is widely agreed to promote national development. Even with this consensus about relevance of higher education today, many differed opinions have come out as to: Who benefits from higher education? And who should fund higher education? Such questions arise because it is not clear as to whether higher education is a private or public good. Such differences have also existed in China and Kenya leading to policy reforms. However, these policy reforms had a different intension leading to different outcomes.

In 1985, for example, the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) Central Committee issued the decision on reform of education system. This policy document came to effect in 1999 when the government of China issued the so called, "The twenty-first Century Education Revitalization Plan" aimed at raising the Gross Enrolment Ratio to 15% by 2010. Following this policy, Chinese universities doubled their enrolment in 1999–2001 and by 2010, Gross Enrolment Ratio was at 26.5% (Yearbook, China Statistical, 2012). On the other hand, following the 1982 attempted coup, the government of Kenya ordered universities to close down indefinitely lasting for about one year. To clean up this backlog, universities were ordered to admit more students popularly referred to as "the double intake" starting from the academic year 1987/88. In 1990/91, there was another double intake prompted by a shift in education cycle which added an extra year in the university. With all these challenges, the demand

for higher education kept on rising and the government had no clear plan for a considerable period of time. This led to rapid expansion of university education responding to high demand (Sifuna, 1998).

Although there seems to be minimal similarities between China and Kenya from geographical position to system of governance, their relations have largely remained cordial. More recently, the governments of China and Kenya have been intensifying their bilateral relations and agreements in various sectors including infrastructure, agriculture, health, education, trade and tourism. China is leading the scale speed up in higher education with Kenya going about the same direction. It is therefore important to investigate the similarities and differences in the development and current situation in higher education so as to establish where the two countries can collaborate and learn more from each other. The purpose of this study is therefore to investigate historical development and current situations of higher education drawing a comparison between China and Kenya.

### **1.3. Objectives of the study**

The objectives of the study are;

- (1) To trace the creation and development of higher education institutions in China and Kenya.
- (2) To identify the main policies adopted by the central governments of China and Kenya to expand access to higher education and assure quality.
- (3) To pinpoint challenges facing higher education in China and Kenya.

### **1.4. Research questions**

- (1) How has been the creation and development of higher education institutions in China and Kenya?
- (2) What policies were adopted by China and Kenya to expand access to higher education and assure quality?
- (3) Are there challenges facing higher education in China and Kenya?

This study responded to these questions by examining higher education from each country's perspective, and then proceeding to draw lessons they can learn from one another.

### **1.5. Significance of the study**

This study will lay down a useful platform for many countries, especially the developing countries, to learn from one another's strengths and challenges of accessing higher education. Furthermore, policy lessons have been provided on issues related to access and quality in higher education so as to establish a corrective measure for improvements. Therefore, the present study will assist educational planners, educational policy-makers and other interested parties in planning and making appropriate decisions concerning accessibility and quality of higher education.

## **2. Methodology**

Comparative education can be defined as the analysis of education systems and problems in two or more national environments in terms of social, political, economic, cultural, ideologies and other contexts (Brickman & Fraser, 1968). This paper will look at the higher education systems of China and Kenya separately, and then explore their strengths and critics from experts' opinions in order to draw a comparison for future policy formation. The comparisons drawn from this study will not be used to judge which system is ideal or superior to the other, but rather to understand the factors underlying the similarities and differences so that each country can learn from one another. The reason for studying other societies' educational system is to discover what can be learned that will contribute to improved policy and practices at home (Arnove et al., 2013).

This study used documentary study review method to collect and analyse data. Documentary review method of research involves the analysis of texts and documents that contain data in line with

the research problems (Gaborone, 2006). Documentary research is concerned with analysis, synthesis and interpretation of data to find patterns and generalized results so as to address research questions. We conducted a literature search for qualitative studies published within the discipline of higher education from Huazhong University of Science and Technology's library educational databases and computer search function provided by Baidu, Google and Google scholar. In selecting the articles, we limited the span to 2005–2015; however, articles published earlier than 2005 which were highly relevant to this study were also considered.

The present study employed critical case sampling that involves selecting a small number of important cases to yield the most information with greatest impact on the development of knowledge (Palinkas et al., 2015). The sample was limited to published, peer-reviewed journal articles and government documents because they have generally attained higher quality standards and they are a principle source of scholarly evidence (Hancock & Algozzine, 2015). The samples selected were those that are highly cited based on Google scholar. A total of 57 documents searched were obtained and read with only 24 articles selected for final analysis owing to their relevance and depth. We employed qualitative test analysis to identify the history, strengths and challenges faced by higher education in both countries (Kuckartz, 2014).

### 3. Introduction

Globalization has exerted much pressure on governments of today to redefine their roles in relation to education. In today's world, educational policies have increasingly been thought about and made within the context of the pressure and requirements of globalization (Segrera, 2010). The two main bases of globalization have been identified as information and innovation, which are highly knowledge intensive (Carnoy, 2005). Education in this case has been applied to the process of globalization through a knowledge economy. In the knowledge economy, education is a crucial factor to ensure economic productivity and competitiveness in the international context (Nogueira & Jaana, 2013). Thus, education has become a tool for economic growth rather than as a tool to prepare students to adapt to their own society. Cultural and social values have eroded and replaced with commercial values. Many fields of study in universities that do not translate into substantial profits are marginalized and underfunded or eliminated. Pressure has been taken to faculties to be more productive and curriculums are now designed to link the industries. Globalization has posed serious problems and also created opportunities for higher education development.

Higher education has potential economic and social benefits for individual and society, and generally driven by the cultural and political waves of a country. Higher education has been directly linked to social and economic development as seen by rising economic giants like China while most developing countries still fight with trade deficits. Many researchers on Chinese higher education have observed that the higher education system in China has been moulded by market needs with an emphasis on building a socialist market economy that has Chinese characteristics. In pursuit of a balanced trade, many developing countries have stepped up their spending on education so as to produce a working force that can make more sophisticated technologies. Kenya is no exception; since its independence, the founding father (Mzee Jomo Kenyatta) emphasized on education that will solve the numerous ills that plague the young established country. Currently, with the vision 2030 still underway, Kenya has placed higher education as its only means to achieve its industrialization goals taking China as its example of success.

### 4. Creation and development of higher education

The modern higher education in China is estimated to have emerged in the late 1890s with Western influence, especially the Christian missionaries taking an important role in shaping it. By 1949, when the People's Republic of China was established, a total of 205 higher education institutions had been created consisting of 21 church-affiliated universities, 61 private universities and 123 state and provincial universities. The number of students enrolled was approximately 120,000, and the Gross Enrolment Rate was less than 1%. On the other hand, the history of higher education in Kenya can be traced way back in 1956 when the Royal Technical College was established in Nairobi as a

constituent college of Makerere University, Uganda. With the establishment of University of East Africa, Royal Technical College became the University College of Nairobi in 1963, offering programmes and degrees of University of London till 1966. It is within this same period that Kenya got independence from Great Britain. In 1970, the University of East Africa was dissolved making Universities of Nairobi full-fledged university and first university in Kenya.

### 5. Expansion of higher education

Influenced by the Soviet Union in the early 1950, the Chinese Government took measures to reform its higher education institutions with the aim of developing specialized institutes and strengthening comprehensive universities to develop industrial-oriented talents and teachers. This led to the introduction of a central plan for national unified instruction system and the development of 229 higher education institutions. By 1965, a total of 434 higher education institutions had been established enrolling about 680,000 students. Between 1966 and 1976, China's Cultural Revolution took centre stage devastating higher education sector leading to a drop in students' enrolment from 674,400 to 47,800 and declining education quality. In 1977, the higher education came back to its full operation, especially with the reintroduction of The National Higher Education Entrance Examination (Gao Kao).

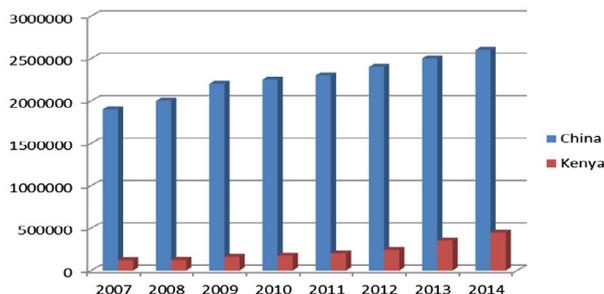
In 1985, the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee (CCPCC) issued "the decision to reform education system" with the aim of providing such institutions with more autonomy. This was followed by state council (1986) issuing, "the Preliminary Regulations of Responsibilities of Higher Education Governance". This policy document defined the authorities and responsibilities regarding higher education governance. In 1993, the CCPCC and the state council jointly issued, "China's Outline for Educational Reforms and Development" which pointed out reforms to higher education system. In August 1998, the Chinese Government established the first Higher Education Laws which came to full implementation early 1999. This led to tremendous growth, changing the face of Chinese education from elite to mass with participation rate increasing from 9% in 1998 to 40%. To encourage private sector participation, China's National Legislative People's Congress passed a law in 2012 for promoting private education. The number of regular higher education institutions increased drastically from 1,022 in 1998 to 2,852 in 2015, up by 179.1% (YearBook, 2015).

The government of Kenya continued to strengthen and expand University of Nairobi in an effort to develop an elite society. With increasing student enrolment, the then President Daniel Moi formed a working commission which recommended the establishment of a second public university that is more technological oriented, Mackay Report 1982 cited by (Amutabi, 2003). In 1984, Moi University was established followed by Kenyatta University (1985). Since then, the system had undergone considerable expansion by 2009, 7 public universities, 12 newly established colleges and more than 22 private universities with varying levels of accreditation enrolling 122,874 students (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2010). The number of universities increased drastically from 21 in 1998 to 52 in 2012, up by 147.6%.

In the non-university sector, students attend public and private technical and vocational polytechnics, colleges (teacher and medical colleges), Technical Training Institutes, Institutes of Technology and professional colleges which have seen an increase in the number of institutions from 627 in 2008 to 813 in 2012, raising enrolment from 71,167 to 82,843 within the same period (Ministry of Education, 2012). In 2013, the number of universities increased to 22 public universities with 80 campuses spread across the country, 13 church-affiliated universities and 18 private universities. Student enrolments have also increased with latest enrolment figures for 2014 showing that there were 443,783 students enrolled at universities across Kenya, more than double the 2012 enrolment number. Approximately 215,000 of those students were enrolled at private institutions.

Figure 1 compares the annual university students' enrolment in China and Kenya from 2007 to 2014. Though it appears China has dwarfed Kenya in terms of university enrolment, one thing to note here is that the general population of China was approximately 30 times that of Kenya by 2015.

**Figure 1. Yearly university students' enrolment in China and Kenya from 2007 to 2014.**



**Table 1. Yearly percentage change in student enrolments to higher education**

Year	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14
China's % increase in enrolments	7.2	6.1	4.1	3.5	3.6	3.2	3.2
Kenya's % increase in enrolments	9.5	32.1	9.5	11.7	21.3	42.0	29.9

China has a larger system of higher education compared to Kenya; it is therefore important to draw a comparison of students' enrolments to higher education between the two countries by looking at the annual percentage change of students' enrolments. Currently, the percentage increase in students' enrolment is higher in Kenya than China. This has been attributed by the fact that China's expansion to higher education started much earlier than in Kenya, and it is now heading towards stability point. From 1998 to 2014, China saw an increase in higher education institutions from 1,022 to 2,529 translating to an increase by 149% and students' enrolments grew by six fold, while in Kenya, for the same period, the number of higher education institutions increased by 148% and students enrolment increased by sevenfold. Recently, higher education enrolment number in Kenya skyrocketed due to the impact of free and compulsory primary education in 2003 and subsidized secondary education, since the initial cohort has begun enrolling for higher education studies and the introduction of double intake and privately sponsored students in all public universities to meet this demand. Table 1 compares the yearly percentage changes in students' enrolments in higher education for China and Kenya.

### 6. Quality assurance of higher education

The rapid expansion of higher education experienced by many countries globally has brought a conflict between quality and quantity. For example, in China and Kenya, the growth of funding could not balance with the ever-rising enrolments, leading to quality issues related to congested facilities that were initially designed to accommodate only a few students as well as poor working conditions in most institutions. As a result, many parents preferred to take their children to study in developed countries such as USA, UK and so on. According to UNESCO's data, in 2012, 13,573 Kenyan students were studying abroad, with 3,776 in the USA, 2,235 in the UK and 1,191 in Australia (Wenr, 2015), though the number has significantly reduced over time. Fortunately, this issue got the attention of the central governments of China and Kenya to take action and strengthen the quality of higher education. This study has explored the policies and measures adopted by the central governments of China and Kenya to address the challenges of quality in higher education.

Due to the increasing Gross Enrolments Rates, China has paid much attention to quality through the introduction of Education Revitalization Action Plan of 2003–2007, which focussed on teaching quality evaluation system. The Ministry of Education of China set up higher education teaching evaluation centres to organize the implementation of higher education teaching evaluation work to standardize scientific, systematic and professional directions. Presently, teaching evaluation has been devolved to the institutional level with the aim of constructing higher education quality

guarantee system. The National Outline for Medium and Long-term Educational Reforms and Development (2010–2020) which was promulgated in 2010 by CCPCC and the state council gave guidelines for future reforms and development of China’s educational system. This policy document focuses on enhancing the overall higher education quality, hence sustainable development. To achieve this target, China introduced the so-called project 211 and project 985. Project 211 was aimed at strengthening 100 specific institutions and key disciplinary areas while project 985 was launched by the government of China for the purpose of establishing twenty-first-century world-class universities in China.

The Chinese Government understands well that higher education plays a critical role in cultivating a high calibre of professionals, developing science, technology and culture as well as promoting socialist modernization drives. In his speech at Qsinghua University (April 2011), former President Hu Jintao emphasized that, “keeping enhancing quality is the bloodline of higher education”. To attain this goal, higher education has been structured to become more balanced and distinctive to cultivate talents and professionals in scientific research and social services. In a push to boost teaching quality, professors are now required to teach lower grade students and step up the building of infrastructure. The management of quality postgraduate students has continuously been improved through setting up a “double mentor system” so as to combine production, scholarship and research. There is sharing of scientific and technological resources among universities, research institutes and enterprises to improve technological transfer for society’s well-being. Higher education rejuvenation plan for central and Western regions was carried out to bring a balance in quality between West and East. A new college enrolment quota system was developed and expanded in favour of central and Western regions which are poor in higher education resources.

The quality assurance system of higher education in Kenya has been structured into internal quality assurance, external quality assurance and accreditation which are performed by the Commission for University Education established in 1995 under the University Act. The Commission for University Education is mandated to accredit universities, coordinate long-term planning for university education and advice the government of establishment of public universities, among many other functions. For example, in his speech while cancelling some certificates issued by Kisii University, Prof. Henry Thairu (Chairman of Commission for University Education Dec 2014) said, “The Commission is, therefore considering auditing all the systems of Kisii University to ensure quality in the delivery of university education”. The government has also created a Directorate of Higher Education which is under the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology to address issues of importance in higher education sector. The government further established National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation aimed at promoting innovations in science and technology through providing grants for scholarly work and organizing trade fairs, exhibitions and symposiums.

The Kenyan Government introduced Performance Contract and Quality Management Systems in public universities, aimed at improving the quality of service delivered to students. There is a covenant between the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and higher education institutions that they should apply ISO standards and follow the ISO model. This was used to give feedback about the performance of both the teaching and non-teaching staff according to international standards and provides for corrective measure for future improvement. The government of Kenya has embarked on new policies to govern universities. By 2005, there was a shift from president as the chancellor of all public universities to appointment of chancellors for public university. Furthermore, top managers are now recruited through a rigorous selection process which has greatly improved leadership and management of public universities. While addressing the chancellors of various public universities in Kenya on May 2015, President Uhuru Kenyatta said that, “higher education is growing at an incredible pace; this is not only because of demand but also because of the pace of development”. Commercial banks have now stepped in to support government limited funds through providing educational loans to students and higher education institutions to enhance quality.

## 7. Funding in higher education

Human capital plays an important role in increasing labour productivity and thus economic growth. Individuals, firms and nations have in the past foregone earnings and invest in initial costs of education such as tuition and fees hoping to increase their earning and productivity in the future (Jebaraj Benjamin, Srikamaladevi Marathamuthu, Muthaiyah, & Raman, 2011). Research conducted by Chou (2003) found that 42% of Australian economic growth between 1960 and 2000 was attributed to the rise in educational attainment (Chou, 2003). It has been reported that for Sub-Saharan Africa to reap the benefits of human capital then, institutions of higher learning must be sufficiently financed to provide quality training and sound professional development (Gudo, 2014). Economic hardship and growing demand for higher education have pushed governments and institutions of higher learning to seek alternative sources of revenue to fund higher education activities.

Public funding in China has remained a key source of finance for public higher education; however, its relative proportion is gradually reducing as a diversified system is being established. By 2004, the national input to higher education was US\$ 15.5 billion which was 2.6 times more than 1998; with the faster growth of enrolment, expenditure per student declined by 23%. Such trends made the Chinese Government introduce cost sharing, and within the same period, tuition and fees increased from 14.8 to 30.4% (Fengliang, 2012). As tuition and fees increased by more than three times household income only increased averagely at 1.6%. This raises the challenge of affordability with a question at hand: Is it reasonable to continue with the cost sharing scheme? It is important to set a limit of how much the tuition and fees should be charged to avoid locking out students from economically disadvantaged background. Currently, tuition and fees vary according to the institutions, programmes and location. The Ministry of Education has established guidelines for tuition based on per student's operational cost, local economic development and household income. To ease the burden of tuition, the government of China introduced the financial aid system to students that includes state grant programmes for needy students, merit-based scholarships, work study, tuition waiver and student loans. In a bid to track borrowers after they complete studies, the people's Bank of China established a national integrated personal credit information database system.

In Kenya, public universities have traditionally relied on government funding to carry out their activities. The government paid students' tuition and living expenses basically to create highly trained manpower that can replace the departing colonial administrators. As number of students seeking higher education continued to grow rapidly and the harsh economic situation experienced by the country, it was difficult for the government to adequately finance higher education. In the financial year 2004/2005, the national input to higher education was US\$ 122 million which increased to US\$ 160 million in 2008/2009 representing 31% while enrolment rates grew by 51% in the same period. The government further resulted in cutting down university spending and introduced cost sharing where students were to pay tuition and fees and cater for their living expenses. Since many students could not afford the cost of higher education, the government introduced the student loan scheme. A challenge of recovering loan from students who have completed studies resulted in the establishment of Higher Education Loans Board (HELB). However, the challenge of unemployment and immigration still poses a threat to loan recovery. In addition to loans, the HELB provides bursaries to needy students. Students in both public and private universities can also apply for bursaries from the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) kitty (Ngolovoi, 2008). Some universities have resulted in establishing income-generating activities to supplement their budgets, for example, University of Nairobi has established a limited company under the name University of Nairobi Enterprise Service Limited that handles all income-generating activities, whereas Baraton University has set up agricultural firms to harness from agricultural products.

## 8. Further challenges of access and quality in higher education

The ever demand and rapid expansion of higher education for the last two decades have come along with some strengths and challenges as discussed below.

### **8.1. Equity**

During the expansion process of higher education in China, imbalances arose in the allocation of higher educational resources based on regions. The more developed provinces, especially from the east, could afford to invest more in educational resources than their western counterpart. Similarly, students in urban areas were able to allocate more educational resources than those in the rural areas. Consequently, the number of students from rural areas declined, especially in the cream universities. Kenyan situation is not unique; many students, especially in rural areas, cannot afford to further their studies. Students in urban areas and those from well-off families were able to allocate more educational resources than those in the rural areas and economically disadvantaged families. Also, in some families, they prefer to educate male due to cultural believes. Consequently, the number of students locked out from joining universities and gender imbalance have increased.

### **8.2. Graduate unemployment**

With the constant changes in human resource market, many graduates have found their skills irrelevant to the labour market. Therefore, higher education should likewise transform to meet the response of demand. Due to curriculum that is not responsive to modern-day needs of the labour market coupled with tough structural adjustment programmes and recruitment restrictions, many students are unlucky to find employment. Limited access to higher education has encouraged brain drain in search for greener pastures overseas. For example, findings have revealed that less than 30% of Kenyans going abroad return and that there are over a million living and working abroad, Siringi and Kimani (2005).

### **8.3. Academic professionals**

With the increasing student enrolments, the number of faculties needs to be increased to meet the additional students. However, the Chinese higher education reforms of 1999 expanded students enrolment by four times; yet, full-time faculty members increased by 1.7 times. This increased the average faculty to student ratio from 1:18 to 1:30 for many higher educational institutions. With continuous government support, the ratio has gone down to 1:18 by 2014. The case is more serious in Kenya, where lack of funds to recruit faculties has been a major problem. In addition, many professors have resigned for better paying jobs in other countries as others go on strike demanding for better pay. This increased the average faculty to student ratio to 1:36 (University of Nairobi); 1:47 (Moi University) while the rest of the universities averaged at 1:35 by 2010, leading to overcrowded classes. Faculties have resulted in doing part-time jobs to supplement their meagre pay and are no longer keen on undertaking meaningful research and publications, lowering the quality and standards of education.

## **9. Policy lessons**

From previous literature, China experienced a period of rapid expansion far much earlier than it is for Kenya today. Therefore, there are many lessons Kenya can learn from of China's experience of higher education growth. It is important to note that the two countries have a centralized system of policies and regulations governing higher education. However, many educational practitioners have suggested that decentralizing institutions promote competition among the institutions making cost of higher education affordable and of good quality. A focused attention and adaptation of best practice model borrowed from China with minor changes to fit ground realities in Kenya can result in a new lease of higher education in the country. This paper has assessed the policies of higher education in China and established the following key policy changes that can be adopted by the Kenyan Government to address the present challenges facing its higher education sector.

- The government should increase funding, especially in the field of research, while holding universities accountable for resource utilization. Private sector participation can be encouraged, especially commercial banks to aid institutions of higher learning. Universities should establish entrepreneur activities that will provide the recipe for affordable higher education (Yebei, 2007).
- There is a widespread perception that quality has deteriorated in institutions of higher learning due to increased student enrolments, strikes, inadequate and outdated equipment and low staff

morale. Although internal quality assurance mechanism exists, it is highly bureaucratic and needs to be modified and strengthened to address the challenge of quality.

- Research should be made an integral part of every academic staff member and evaluation based on research output in addition to teaching, administration, mentoring and community services. Government funding should be tied to research output.
- Higher education institutions in Kenya should institutionalize staff performance appraisal system to identify training needs for staff development and recognition of exemplary performers.
- There is need for promoting equity, especially in low-income families and girl child education; quota system should be established so that all students have equal opportunities of accessing higher education. Government should provide targeted funds to disadvantaged students and underserved regions in the country.
- The government should create job opportunities for graduate students through public and private investments. Government should partner with both higher education institutions and industry to assess training needs for current and future human capital requirements.

## 10. Conclusion

Many countries in the world are pushing their way towards a mass higher education system. Critics are worried that enormous growth in enrolment will result in poor academic quality. The Chinese experience has revealed otherwise to such critics by maintaining massification and at the same creating world-class universities. China understands very well that lack of awareness and preparedness will threaten the transition process in higher education. This has attracted the attention of many countries in the world. In Kenya, for example, there has been a drastic increase in the number of students enrolling in higher education caused by double intake, free primary education and subsidized secondary education. However, little efforts were made to expand higher education due to the hierarchical structure established during the colonial time. For this reason Kenya has continued to struggle in the provision of access and quality to its students. The Kenyan Government should understand that higher education is expensive and must be prepared to fully support the sector. Likewise, higher education institutions must be accountable in resource utilization and play a pivot role in national development through social, political and economic transformation of people. The Kenya Government should borrow a leaf from its Chinese counterpart, by holding the largest stake in educational decision-making process. Such move will help the government to spur growth and development and attain its vision 2030 goals.

## 11. Limitations and suggestions

This study was carefully conducted with solid methodology; however, there are some limitations. Firstly, the study focused on policies on access and quality in higher education drawing a comparison between China and Kenya. Thus, it may not be possible to generalize the study to other countries because different countries have unique policies on access and quality in higher education. Future studies are encouraged to conduct this type of study involving many countries. Secondly, we used documentary review method that involved the most relevant information for the study. However, it is possible that the review may not contain all the salient aspects of higher education in China and Kenya. We recommend future studies to employ other methodologies of data collection such qualitative surveys.

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