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MASSIFICATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND ITS IMPACT ON GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY IN EMERGING ECONOMIES

A case study of business graduates' employability in the
Kenyan labour market context

Abstract

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Massification of higher education institutions over the years and the resultant impact it has had on the quality of higher education has become a key area of concern in academic and policy circles. Quality decline associated with this rapid expansion in many emerging economies, it is believed is perpetuating a skills gap in labour markets by churning out ill-equipped graduates. The level of resourcing [inadequate staffing & physical infrastructure], governance [weak organizational structures and low stakeholder participation] and pedagogical factors [social hierarchies and outdated approaches to learning, curriculum design/teaching and assessment] in Kenya's higher education institutions are key factors stemming from massification that are responsible for quality degradation in higher education. This research sought to quantitatively establish which among these factors including graduates' responsibility and perceived employability, significantly affect employability of business graduates in Kenya's labour market.

The research develops and utilises an analytical framework that not only depicts the relationship between these factors and higher education quality In Kenya but also incorporates the central tenet of human capital and job signalling theories, which is that a positive correlation exists between higher education quality and labour market productivity. This research utilizes a quantitative approach with a survey as the primary data collection instrument, as it is guided by the basic ontological premise that knowledge about the phenomenon under investigation already exists out there objectively. The findings show that the level of resourcing [inadequate staffing & physical infrastructure], and pedagogical culture [curriculum relevance] are the two main factors that significantly negatively affect graduate employability. This research concludes by emphasizing the importance of getting graduates' feedback on their employability after graduation. Even with its flaws, Kenya's higher education institutions might use this graduate perspective as one of many inputs when formulating institutional policies on graduate employability.

Keywords: Massification, graduate employability, higher education quality, labour market, skills

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List of abbreviations

AI-Artificial Intelligence

CUE-Commission for University Education

HEG-Higher Education Group

HEIs- Higher Education Institutions

EBK-Engineering Board of Kenya

IoT-internet of Things

SPSS- Statistical Package for Social Scie

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background information on massification of higher education and graduate employability

Post-world war II, countries at different stages of development initially focused on expanding their respective higher education systems to ensure access was not exclusive to traditional elites (Ertl, 2005; Trow 2007). Whereas the expansion in some countries to date has been outstandingly successful, significant unmet demand and inequities still exist in other countries (Mamabolo & Myres, 2020). The importance of higher education in human development and modernization has resulted in increased demand for its access by the masses across many developing countries. However, the massification of higher education as described by Hornsby and Osman (2014) in these countries is largely responsible for quality degradation. The decline in quality is manifested in ways such as inadequate learning infrastructure, underqualified academic staff, irrelevant curricula and graduates ill equipped for the labour market.

The percentage of the global student population moving on to some form of higher education stood at 33 percent in 2019, up from 19 percent in 2000 (Mamabolo & Myres, 2020). Key factors responsible for this rapid expansion include governments' response to pressures of increasing popular demand for higher education slots especially due to ever increasing secondary school completion rates (Marginson,2016). Families' desires for upward social mobility, a strong push for national economic competitiveness, the increasing need to develop high-level skills in particular crucial fields and movement to knowledge-based economies are also key factors that have led to more value being placed on higher education (Akalu, 2014; Odhiambo,2011).The move towards marketization and increased private sector engagement has also accelerated the rapid expansion of higher education as it has made the market for higher education more attractive to private investors (Hornsby & Osman,2014). This rapid expansion seemingly in many contexts appears to have taken place at the expense of quality (Akalu,2014; McCowan, 2018). Widespread concerns have emerged that this rapid growth and expansion has caused a decline in quality of higher education especially among low-income developing countries in Africa, Latin America and Asia (Luckett, 2010; Mitoko, 2021).

According to Tomlinson (2008), massification of higher education has meant that more and more graduates are competing for fewer job opportunities; something that has greatly reduced the currency of a first degree and increased the competition in graduate labour markets. Today, graduates are increasingly entering very competitive labour markets that are not only congested, precarious and dynamic but also turbulent and unpredictable (Suleman,2017). As a consequence an ever growing number of new graduates are increasingly finding themselves having to opt for lower cadre job positions such as clerical and administrative jobs as well as marketing and customer service which are all associated with widespread underemployment and in many instances problematic long term career development pathways (Osseiran 2020). In many developing and developed economies the phenomenon of graduate underemployment and unemployment has become a policy issue (Calvo & Garcia,2021; Suleman,2017). Bennet (2018) argues that strengthening graduate employability has been one supply side approach to addressing graduate underemployment and unemployment . As a result, employability is increasingly being adopted by some universities as a fourth mission in addition to research, teaching and community engagement (Bennet,2018).

Graduate employability by definition is a broad combination of the skills, knowledge, attributes and behaviours that enable a graduate to secure a job, stay on the job, thrive on the job, find another job if necessary and ultimately progress in their chosen career path (Behle,2020 ; Mainga et al.,2022). The terms "soft skills," "generic skills," "21st century skills," and "employability skills" may frequently be used alternately in this research, drawing on this broad definition of graduate employability. This is due to an increasing understanding that, for recent university graduates to thrive and eventually succeed in today's constantly changing labour market, they must not only have a degree and good grades but also technical discipline-specific knowledge (McArthur et al., 2017).According to McArthur et al. (2017), graduates must acquire additional generic/soft/employability skills to effectively stand out and overcome the challenges that are frequently connected with the transition from higher educational institutions to the workplace and, ultimately, to chosen career trajectories.

1.2 Statement of the research problem

The relationship between higher education and labour markets has been significantly reshaped over time. Tomlinson (2012) argues that this reshaping has primarily been driven by major structural adjustments in higher education; most notable one being massification, as well as changes in the nature of economies given the global transition towards knowledge economies. As depicted in Kogan & Brennan(1993) and Johnston (2003), traditionally, the relationship between higher education and labour market needs has been a closely corresponding one, albeit at times in loose and intangible ways. Higher education has traditionally helped regulate the flow of graduates into the labour market in three crucial ways. These being (i) in terms of the knowledge and skills that higher education is supposed to transfer to graduates which then feed into labour markets. (ii) credential legitimization which signifies to employers the level of skills and knowledge graduates possess and (iii) the enrichment of personal and cultural attributes (Kogan & Brennan,1993; Johnston, 2003).

Mainga et al. (2022) in their study on graduate employability of business school students in the Bahamas identify student responsibility and perceived employability as other crucial factors that have an impact on graduate employability. In terms of how student responsibility may impact on graduate employability, their study shows that students may have a poor understanding on the education-employment pathways on which they have embarked. The study findings show that a significant number of undergraduate students do not put in the effort or utilise all the available opportunities to develop employability skills. Meanwhile, the authors express perceived employability as a psychological concept that captures graduates' subjective self-assessment on their belief in their ability to find the right job, retain it or even get a new one if necessary. Mainga et al. (2022) maintain that perception is crucial as it has a huge influence on behaviour including self-esteem, self-efficacy, self-directed job search, ambition and perseverance. Graduate employability is often viewed as a dynamic, complex multidimensional construct that comprises of both subjective and objective elements (Suleman,2018; Jackson,2013). Consequently, developing graduate employability calls for a multipronged approach involving all stakeholders such as students, higher education institutions, government actors and agencies, academics, careers counsellors, employers as well as employer associations. Despite this shared and diffused responsibility, a literature

cross examination seems to assign the greatest responsibility for employability on the graduates on the first instance and higher education on the second instance.

The concept of graduate employability or the relationship between educational attainment and labour market needs and outcomes in this research is largely informed by the human capital theory (Becker, 1964; Schultz, 1961) and the job signalling theory (Arrow, 1993; Stiglitz 1975). Both of these two theories imply that a positive relationship exists between investments in higher education and returns in the labour market. Human capital theory (Becker, 1964; Schultz, 1961) argues that higher education bolsters individuals' productivity something which results in enhanced job performance. The theory also maintains that a mismatch between the skills required by the labour market and the skills possessed by a graduate has huge consequences for productivity, wages and the probability to get meaningful employment. As such higher education provides marketable abilities and skills and therefore the more highly educated an individual is the more successful the individual will be in the labour market in terms of not only income but also work opportunities. Job market signalling theory (Arrow, 1973; Stiglitz, 1975) has its basis on the premise that hiring at its core is an investment decision for employers. Given that employers often have to make recruitment decisions in conditions of uncertainty, when making these decisions they factor in signals conveyed by the levels of educational attainment/employability skills/competencies and relevant work experience.

Universities in Kenya and elsewhere within the African continent, now more than ever are faced with the pressure to conform to expectations associated with globalisation-induced national development plans. Kenya's vision 2030 development blue print is one good casing point that places strong emphasis on quality higher education and how pivotal it is in reducing unemployment as well as increasing Kenya's global competitiveness. It envisages a situation where the country's higher education institutions strategically match skills and competencies to labour market demands through the provision of relevant quality academic programs at all levels (Odhiambo, 2014). Tumutu et al. (2013) affirm that Kenya's universities increasing inability to sufficiently prepare employable graduates for the Kenyan labour market has greatly contributed to rising graduate unemployment levels. Arasa and Calvert (2013) attributes this to several factors, notably skills mismatch in the labour markets demand and

supply, disparities between graduate expectations vis-à-vis market realities, insufficient on the job experience, insufficient life skills training and inadequate labour market information. The author maintains that the greatest challenge for the higher education institutions is to prepare graduates that are not only employable but also employment generators in their local labour market contexts. However, Arasa & Calvert (2013.p.4) cautions that the focus on producing graduates for 'local' labour markets could at times be at odds with the strong emphasis on the 'global', something which the author argues that has resulted in a competitive, low quality, and commercially driven higher education. Past studies (Wangenge-Ouma,2008. p.8) show that despite this realization, Kenya's higher education institutions have been slow in equipping their students with 'generic skills' needed in local labour markets. This is in part attributable to universities being often unconnected to their local contexts in ways that weaken the pursuit of mutually beneficial goals (Wangenge-Ouma,2008). According to Wangenge-Ouma (2008), Kenya's universities should take community engagement seriously as it can greatly nurture generic skills among graduates and in the process foster connections with the local labour market contexts in ways that increase graduate employability.

McCowan (2018) identifies resourcing [inadequate staffing & physical infrastructure], governance [weak organizational structures and low stakeholder participation] and pedagogical factors [social hierarchies and outdated approaches to learning, curriculum design/teaching and assessment] as the three main factors hindering quality enhancement in Kenya's higher education system. It can be argued that given the qualitative nature of the study; as is also the case with several other studies alluded to above, which only qualitatively explores the extent to which these factors act as barriers to improve higher education quality, there is need for an empirical study that ascertains whether these factors have any significant impact on graduate employability or the probability of Kenyan university graduates upon completion of studies securing meaningful employment in their respective fields of study. In other words, while it is known which factors qualitatively affect higher education quality and subsequently graduate employability, it largely remains unknown quantitatively the extent to which these factors have a significant bearing on graduate employability in the Kenyan labour market context. In addition, although often at times discussed in many public forums in the country, there has been very little systematic empirical research on massification of higher education and graduates' perception of their level of preparedness for transition into the

workplace. Tumutu et al. (2013) observes that academic research on graduate employability in the country has not pursued graduates' views and perceptions with the same vigour as employers' perceptions. This quantitative research seeks to fill these gaps.

1.2.1 Research aim

This study seeks to test the assertion that massification of higher education has perpetuated a quality decline which in turn has reduced graduate employability. There seems to be sufficient evidence from multiple perspectives in literature supporting this claim. For instance Helen (2016) argues that due to the exponential growth in HEIs have undergone in recent years, higher education in many developing countries is in a state of crisis. A crisis evidenced in ways such as deteriorating quality and relevance, limited research, and low staff morale. Meanwhile, Marginson (2016) opines that quality decline associated with this rapid expansion in many developing countries, it is believed is perpetuating a skills gap in labour markets by producing half-baked ill-equipped graduates.

This research seeks to relate the array of factors drawn from literature; widely thought to stem from the rapid expansion of higher education in developing countries; that have precipitated the gradual decline in the quality of higher education, to graduate employability in Kenya's labour market. These factors or independent variables include the level of resourcing [inadequate staffing & physical infrastructure], governance [weak organizational structures and low stakeholder participation] and pedagogical factors [social hierarchies and outdated approaches to learning, curriculum design/teaching and assessment] in Kenya's higher education institutions. The study includes graduate responsibility and graduates' perceived employability as other independent variables identified in literature as having a positive impact on graduate employability

The purpose of this research therefore is to understand the extent to which the above-mentioned independent variables affect graduate employability in the country's labour market. The findings of this quantitative research shall be crucial in informing policies around skills development, fostering employability and improving national competitiveness. This is because identifying the significance of the factors will help policy makers in the country craft much needed targeted policy actions to tackle low graduate employability.

1.2.2 Research questions & hypotheses

To guide this research the following main research question has been formulated:

- (i) Which factors significantly affect graduate employability in Kenya's labour market?

As sub questions, the following shall be addressed:

- (ii) Which employability skills do Kenya's university graduates perceive as most crucial when employers are making recruitment decisions?
- (iii) Which employability skills are perceived by Kenya's university graduates as fully developed at the time of graduation?

This research follows a case study survey research design (Creswell,2018).Based on the findings of the preliminary literature review, the central hypothesis is that massification of higher education has negatively impacted graduate employability in Kenya's labour market. To reiterate, inadequate resourcing, irrelevant curricula , weak institutional governance, and out dated pedagogical culture are key factors stemming from massification that are largely responsible for quality degradation in Kenya's higher education (McCowan,2018). While graduate responsibility and graduates' perceived employability are additional factors identified in literature as positively influencing graduate employability. It is on the basis of this premise the following null predictions have been formulated:

H₀₁: There is no significant negative relationship between graduate employability and the level of inadequate resourcing [inadequate staffing & physical infrastructure].

H₀₂: There is no significant negative relationship between graduate employability and poor governance [weak organizational structures and low stakeholder participation].

H₀₃: There is no significant negative relationship between graduate employability and pedagogical factors [social hierarchies and outdated approaches to learning, curriculum design/teaching and assessment].

H₀₄: There is no significant positive relationship between graduate employability and graduate responsibility.

H₀₅ : There is no significant positive relationship between graduate employability and graduates' perceived employability.

It is also on the basis of the above mentioned premise the following alternative predictions have been created:

H_{A1}: There is a significant negative relationship between graduate employability and the level of resourcing [inadequate staffing & physical infrastructure].

H_{A2}: There is a significant negative relationship between graduate employability and governance [weak organizational structures and low stakeholder participation].

H_{A3}: There is a negative significant relationship between graduate employability and pedagogical factors [social hierarchies and outdated approaches to learning, curriculum design/teaching and assessment].

H_{A4}: There is a significant positive relationship between graduate employability and graduate responsibility.

H_{A5} : There is a significant positive relationship between graduate employability and graduates' perceived employability.

1.2.3 Significance of the study

There are a number of reasons why a study on massification of higher education and its impact on graduate employability in Kenya is important. Firstly is that there has been very little systematic research on massification and graduate employability in Kenya. Past studies (Odhiambo, 2011; Oketch, 2016) have shown that while Kenya has made significant strides in secondary school level attainment partly due to free primary and highly subsidised secondary education, some indicators of quality higher education have lagged. For instance in 2021 the average grade for high school graduates was a 'C' minus with less than 30 percent of matriculating high school students scoring a grade 'C' or above in English, Maths and Science subjects (Omondi, 2022). Examining graduate employability would show how pre-higher educational deficiencies are dealt with at the university level. Employability skills are crucial to having adaptive, flexible, productive and innovative workers. Therefore a workforce rich in such skills and competencies is key in facilitating the efficient development of globally competitive firms that are vital to economic growth, particularly within knowledge-based economies.

Secondly, Kenyan enterprises have in recent past been increasingly pointing out that an inadequately trained and educated workforce coupled with deficiencies in required employability skills continue to be major problems they encounter during recruitment. In addition, the lack of 'soft skills' has been a major cause of turnover and dismissal among fresh job recruits. The skill gap problem in Kenya, particularly soft skills is something that has also been stressed in past studies on employer skill needs.

Third is that if new Kenyan-based graduates opt to seek employment opportunities in other countries especially in Europe, North America and Australia , there will be a need for them to stand out and possess positional advantage in otherwise what can only be described as extremely competitive and congested labour markets.

Fourth is that that low graduate employability perpetuates poverty and inequality. High quality education that imparts graduates with employability skills could lead to a great reduction of unemployment as well as underemployment, something that could greatly increase productivity and raise living standards in the country.

Fifth is that graduate employability research is crucial in the regular updating of Kenya's university degree programs to ensure that the skills and knowledge contained in academic courses on offer to students are aligned with the current and future employers' skill requirements. This is ever more important given that the environments' in which companies and enterprises operate in today is dynamic and constantly evolving over time not only in Kenya but also globally..

1.3 Structure of the thesis

This research comprises of six chapters. The first chapter contextualizes the research with relevant background information and the research problem, identifies research gaps in the literature, lays out the research aims, significance and the guiding research question and sub questions. The second chapter discusses in depth key concepts in massification of higher education and graduate employability related literature. It critically reviews key concepts on these two fields of study and how they are interlinked, which greatly contributes to the development of the analytical framework in the third chapter. The analytical framework acts as the basis for data gathering and collating. Chapter four outlines the research methodology

(ontological and epistemological assumptions) that justifies why a quantitative design is selected. This chapter also outlines the research design (target population, sampling procedures, instrumentation & statistical tools), issues of reliability and validity as well as ethical considerations. Chapter five is a detailed statistical analysis using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) of data collected and interpretation of results. Chapter six outlines key implications for theory and practice based on the research finding, provides a conclusions & puts forth suggestions for future further research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual definition of graduate employability and the changing nature of work today

There appears to be no international consensus on the definition of graduate employability (Clarke,2017; Romgens et al.,2019). Clarke (2017) opines that this is in part because the topic has attracted researchers from various disciplines notably human resource management, management, organizational psychology, and accounting. The definition of graduate employability in literature has continued to evolve (Romgens et al., 2019). For this research, the augmented definition close to the one alluded in the introduction shall be used. This definition is that graduate employability is a set of skills, knowledge, behaviours, abilities and attributes that make graduates more probable to get initial employment and become successful in their chosen careers. In the process empowering them to become reflective and critical lifelong learners who are adaptive and flexible all through their career spans to the benefit of not only themselves but also their respective employers, communities, and the wider economy (Harvey, 2001). In this era of rapid technological progress and digitization as well as globalization, great emphasis is being given to lifelong learning being reflective, flexible, critical and adaptive all through a graduate's career span. According to Mainga et al. (2022), employability is comprised of not only discipline-specific knowledge but also the possession of distinct skills, abilities and behavioural attributes that are aligned to the world of work. Robinson and Garton (2008) argue that graduates who possess generally acceptable levels of discipline-specific knowledge for entry-level jobs may still be unable to perform on the job if they lack transferable or soft skills. As depicted in Finch et al. (2013), for entry-level graduates to be effective and efficient on their first job, employability skills such as problem-solving, critical thinking, interpersonal skills, effective communication and ability to work in a team are needed.

Amoroso and Burke (2018) opine that traditional careers that used to come with job security and rising the ranks in exchange for employer loyalty are on the decline and are gradually being replaced with 'employability security'. A large portion of work in this new era is done in projects with contractually agreed upon start and end dates (Amoroso & Burke,2018). Moreover, there has been an emergence of new employment arrangements notably portfolio

careers, gig economy as well as contingent and virtual work which all call for frequent and drastic career adjustments (Presti et al.,2019). Graduate career pathways today are highly probable to entail relatively more regular switching between job positions, employers and in some cases even sectors and fields (Mainga et al.,2022). As depicted in Osmani et al. (2019), employability skills increase career mobility given their applicability across jobs, sectors, fields, professions and even contexts. A recent study (Sullivan & Ariss, 2021) shows that graduates today will experience as 18 career transitions during their entire career lifespans. In such a dynamic setting, Mainga et al. (2022) maintain that adaptability and lifelong learning ability of great importance. Worth noting is that a graduate's ability to on-board new skills as he/she navigates across different job positions becomes crucial than skills possessed at any given point in in his/her career lifespan (Finch et al.,2013).As a result of rapid obsolescence of knowledge, there has been a steady decline in competencies' life span (Mainga et al.,2022).As technology takes over and companies constantly seek to restructure and streamline their processes, skills requirements and job structures will inexorably evolve over time, hence the importance of continuous employability enhancement all through a career span.

2.2 Employability skills and competencies

Traditional conceptualization of graduate employability has oftentimes been more about the acquisition of skills, knowledge, behaviors and attributes that employers value (Osmani et al.,2019). The most common list of employability skills and attributes identified in literature as important and that most employers expect fresh university graduates to possess include critical thinking, flexibility, willingness to learn, time management, communication skills (oral and written), interpersonal skills, problem solving, teamwork skill, creativity, numeracy, leadership skills , self-confidence, ethical awareness, conflict management, positive attitude and behaviors, enthusiasm and motivation, ability to work under pressure, self-management, organization and planning, work experience, ability to work independently, organization and planning, ICT savviness among others (Mainga et al.,2022; Osmani et al.,2019). Contemporary conceptualization of employability skills has gone a step further to include the importance of cultural, psychological and social capital (Behle,2020; Romgens et al.,2019; Tomlinson,2017). There has been a large paradigm shift in views from obtaining meaningful and satisfying work to the individual's adaptive capacity and need for not only obtaining work but also retaining

work in a fast-paced environment (Presti et al.,2019). The present-day conceptualization of employability skills also emphasizes the need to enhance self-awareness, proactivity, self-efficacy, career building, reflectivity, agility, resilience, self-directedness, grit and persistence, emotional intelligence, social and cultural awareness, growth mindset as well as lifelong learning as the foundation for a viable career in the 21st century's precarious, turbulent, and constantly evolving labour markets (Lock & Kelly,2020). What is evident from literature is that most employers highly seek employability skills when recruiting entry-level graduates (Lim et al., 2016; Robinson & Garton,2008; Succi & Canovi,2019). Rapid digital transformations of work processes and procedures call for the on-boarding of new competencies and skills among graduates. These new competencies include multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary skills, complex problem-solving skills, big data analysis skills, IT-powered virtual teams' collaboration, ideation and reasoning, systems thinking, curiosity, articulation ability, self-directed continuous learning. There is an urgent need for future graduates to develop such skills as it will greatly help them find tackle and find solutions to complex, ill-structured, interconnected global challenges such as poverty alleviation, food security, climate change, water scarcity among others (Sousa & Wilks,2018).

2.3 Empirical studies on graduate employability

Most empirical studies on graduate employability have shown that oftentimes there seems to a disparity between the knowledge, skills, attributes possessed by most university students at graduation and those sought for by employers (Moore & Jackson,2012; Morton,2015; Osmani et al.,2019). These studies show that across the globe, employers have constantly expressed dissatisfaction with the skillsets possessed by fresh university graduates relative to industry needs often labelling them as not 'work ready' (Osmani et al.,2019). This apparent skills mismatch has been evident in studies on a host of developed countries as well as developing countries (Mainga et al.,2022). The lack of work relevant skills and knowledge among fresh university graduates has significantly contributed to rampant underemployment and unemployment in both developing and developed countries (McArthur et al.,2017; Mgaiwa,2021). Only 13 percent of university graduates in one study of 28 low-income Asian countries were thought to possess the competencies and skills necessary for their occupations (Verma et al., 2018). Only roughly 55 percent of accounting and finance graduates in Australia who participated in an employment outcome study found graduate-

level employment, with many graduates working temporary, casual, or part-time positions (Bennett et al., 2020). In Australia in 2015, over 30 percent of recent business graduates were still jobless four months after graduation (McArthur et al., 2017).

In Europe, North Macedonia had a college graduate unemployment rate of 50.8 percent, Greece 44.7 percent, Italy 43.5 percent, and Spain 24.6 percent (Calvo & Garcia 2021). In addition, 13 European nations had unemployment rates for higher education graduates higher than the targeted 18 percent benchmark (Calvo & Garcia 2021). Approximately 58 percent of graduates in the United Kingdom were working in low-skilled or non-graduate positions (Minocha et al., 2018). According to one study, the percentage of graduates working in non-graduate positions in the United States and the United Kingdom is almost 50 percent. (Lauder & Mayhew 2020). The sluggish rate of job creation in comparison to the increase of higher education demand in these countries may help to explain some of the underemployment and unemployment issues (Calvo & Garcia 2021). However, some of it might be because of a skill gap, particularly when there are available positions and graduate unemployment is prevalent (Mainga et al.,2022).

2.4 Graduates' responsibility and perceived employability

Even though the value of employability skills for new graduates' long-term careers is widely acknowledged, many undergraduate students fail to make an effort or take advantage of all the opportunities to do so while attending university (Amoroso & Burke 2018; Jackson & Edgar, 2019). According to Amaroso and Burke (2018), some students are not even aware of the value of soft skills or employability abilities. Sometimes, students do not even understand the skills that employers are looking for (Lockett & Feng, 2019). Students often overestimate and underrate their employability skills as a result (Gawrycka et al., 2019). Employers were not satisfied with graduates' employability attributes during recruiting, according to a study on Vietnam, and graduating students had a limited awareness of the true needs of the labour market (Tran,2017). Some students believe that information relevant to their field translates to the talents that employers look for (Cavanagh et al.,2015). According to a survey on Chinese students, university students prioritize hard skills and career preparation over soft talents, high grades, and prominent colleges (Lockett and Feng, 2019). It has been suggested that

Chinese higher education institutions should promote graduates' flexibility, adaptability, and critical and reflective thinking to improve employability (Abbas & Sagsan, 2019).

According to Amoroso and Burke (2018), students at universities can improve their employability by doing the following. First, students must become acutely aware of the value of employability skills to their prospects for future job (or be assisted in becoming acutely aware of this). Second, students need to purposefully take advantage of the opportunities that are available to them to develop employability skills through a variety of avenues, including part-time employment, traineeships, industrial excursions, campus discussion and debates, and the effective use of services provided by university career offices and career exhibitions (Amaroso & Burke, 2020). Third, they should educate themselves on the employment opportunities available and the entry-level skill requirements (Lockett & Feng, 2019). Perceived employability by graduates themselves is crucial because it affects real behaviour, such as self-efficacy, self-esteem, motivation, self-directed job searching, persistence, ambition, locus of control, and more (Ayala & Garcia, 2020; Bennett et al., 2020)

2.5 Teaching and learning approaches and graduate employability.

Due to their primary emphasis on fostering students' discipline-specific knowledge and skills, higher education institutions, particularly those in developing countries, have been found to be failing students (Ayoubi et al., 2017; Lim et al., 2016). Universities in emerging economies have come under fire for failing to effectively serve their stakeholders because they are perceived to be disengaged from real managerial practice, overly content-centric, and failing to provide students with the necessary skills to address issues and problems in the real world (Lockett & Feng, 2019). Employers are seeking for supplemental employable skills that will not only help their enterprises become more flexible and adaptable but also creative, agile, innovative, and competitive (Ayoubi et al., 2017). Because of this, graduates who are work-ready or in other words have a high level of discipline-specific expertise and well-developed in-demand skillset will have a higher chance of landing their first job and moving up the career ladder in the long run (Lim et al., 2016). Employability skills can improve students' competitiveness in the job market, particularly in this age of massification of higher education, which has reduced the value of undergraduate degrees (Ayoubi et al., 2017). Even though things are changing, Cameron (2017) nevertheless notes that conventional teacher-

centred methods like lecturing remain dominant in the learning landscape in some universities especially in developing countries.

The long-term skills, behaviours, and attributes needed in today's workplace, such as communication skills, interpersonal skills, teamwork, conflict management, critical thinking, creativity, and innovation, as well as self-motivation, self-awareness, self-efficacy, adaptability, proactivity, and lifelong learning, are not seen as being adequately developed by students upon graduation (Cameron,2017). Cameron (2017) asserts that this is largely due to the traditional teaching and learning methods used in these universities. Lectures, class discussions, memorizing, and regurgitation of theoretical course material are frequent components of conventional teaching and learning (Teng et al., 2019). The lecturer and his/her activities are the highlight of the teaching and learning process (Guardia et al., 2021). In essence, the lecturer is in charge of controlling the teaching process, including what is delivered and how it is delivered. The lecturer is the only source of information, and the emphasis is on imparting to the students unidirectional theoretical and abstract knowledge (Virtanen & Tynjala, 2018). Students are generally expected to merely receive this knowledge in a passive manner and the extent to which they participate in class is entirely up to the lecturer (Guardia et al., 2021).Therefore, a number of employability and higher educational scholars have advocated for the necessity of adding student-centric learning strategies and cutting-edge integrative pedagogues to some of the traditional teaching and learning methods such as lectures, class tutorials and discussions. Innovative integrative pedagogues and student-centred learning methodologies put the student at the heart of the educational process (Avolio et al., 2020). Such methods promote team-based, interactive, experiential, and action-oriented learning (Avolio et al., 2020).

2.6 Conceptualization of quality in higher education

There appears to be no global consensus as to what constitutes quality in higher education (Harvey & Green, 1993; Cheng & Tam, 1997). This is far from just a mere semantic nicety, on the contrary, it touches on ideological divides of higher educational vision. According to Harvey and Green (1993.p.10), 'it is not a different perspective on the same thing but rather differing perspectives on different things with the same label'. Quality in higher education can be taken to refer to any of the different functions of the university inclusive if its community

engagement and research activities. Influential taxonomies of conceptualizations of what constitutes quality in higher education include perfection, exception, fitness for purpose, transformative and value for money (Harvey & Green, 1993). From teaching and learning function perhaps transformation is the ultimate gauge of quality. This is largely because it is a gauge of the positive change within the graduates themselves as opposed to conformity to value for money, product specification/perfection or excellence/exclusivity (Harvey & Green, 1993).

McCowan (2018) argues that universities should strive to enable two forms of transformative learning. These are in-depth discipline-specific knowledge, skill and understanding as well as broader intellectual, personal, cultural and civic development. The learning in the former occurs through the formal taught component at universities while the latter takes place through co-curricular experiences, on-campus human interactions and service learning. However, Tam (2001) opines that this is not always exclusively the case as all aspects of the higher education institution contribute to both modes of learning. This leads Tam (2001) to conclude that quality in higher education then essentially is the existence of conditions within higher education institutions that promote the achievement of these two modes of learning.

Another key conceptualization of quality is that it is a mix of elements of inputs, processes and outcomes (McCowan, 2018). This conceptualization lays significant emphasis on the infrastructure, personnel higher education institutions provide [in terms of the number of academic staff, their qualification levels, facilities etc.] student on-campus experiences and the overall learning quality. According to Nyangau (2014), the construct of quality in higher education has proven to be subjective as its meaning has often been contested by different stakeholders who tend to conceptualize it relative to their contexts. Different countries depending on the different points they are in their development life cycles tend to have different needs. Economic growth and development now are of top priority in Kenya something that calls for the country's higher education institutions to prepare a highly trained, well-educated workforce to drive modernization and industrialization (Nyangau,2014). Key process-related variables crucial to realize this competency goal include the provision of sufficient infrastructure, sufficiently trained academic personnel, curricula

highly responsive to the needs of the knowledge economy as well as highly interactive pedagogy rather than didactics (Owlia & Aspinwall, 1996).

2.7 Massification of higher education in developing countries.

Massification of higher education simply refers the transformation of previously elite higher education systems to mass higher education systems as post-secondary education participation increases dramatically (Trow,2007). Helen (2016) argues that due to this exponential growth, higher education in many developing countries is in a state of crisis. A crisis evidenced in ways such as deteriorating quality and relevance, limited research, and low staff morale. Africa is widely considered as one of the least developed continents in terms of higher education institutions and quality as defined by international higher education quality standards, African higher education systems have suffered from years of neglect occasioned by resource scarcity in many African countries and the somewhat low priority given to higher education by most governments in the continent (World Bank,2019). As depicted in Helen (2016), higher education in Africa has continued to suffer from underfunding which is has led to weakening of research and academic infrastructure and poor working conditions for staff. These problems have not only negatively impacted higher education quality in Africa but also the overall development of many countries in the continent, Kenya not being an exception (Helen,2016). McCowan (2018, p.4) argues that quality problems have caused a general dissatisfaction with the “product of higher education”; referring to the graduates who subsequently move on into society and the labour market. According to Boni, Lopez-Fogues and Walker (2016), higher education has struggled in low-income countries because of more pressing concerns associated with resourcing universal primary and secondary education. However, an increase in awareness on the importance of higher education in sustainable development is putting the sector back into the policy limelight (Boni et al.,2016). Massification of higher education institutions over the years and the resultant impact it has had on the quality of higher education has become a key area of concern in academic and policy circles. Quality decline associated with this rapid expansion in many developing countries, it is believed is perpetuating a skills gap in labour markets by producing half-baked ill-equipped graduates (Marginson,2016).

2.8 Massification and higher education quality in Kenya

In Kenya, the history of formal higher education dates to as far as the 20th century when the then imperial British colonial power established Uganda's Makerere university then Makerere college to replace the non-formal traditional forms of education that previously existed in East Africa. The rising demand for dimension that ensued led to the creation of the Royal Technical College in Nairobi in 1956 as a Makerere university constituent college. The Royal Technical College was later in 1970 renamed to the University of Nairobi; the country's first fully-fledged university post-independence (Odhiambo,2011). The following decades witnessed a continuous growth in demand for higher education albeit as Sifuna (2010) puts it 'an unplanned' expansion of higher education.

Massification and the exponential expansion that many Kenyan universities have undergone in recent years has had a negative impact on the quality of higher education on offer at these universities (McCowan,2018). As Kenyan universities try to cater to these large increases in student numbers, they are faced with a myriad of challenges such as overcrowding, inadequate financial and human resources, crumbling infrastructure and the drop in quality of the different professional courses on offer (Owuor,2012). According to Boni, Lopez-Fogues and Walker (2016), higher education has struggled in low-income countries such as Kenya because of more pressing concerns associated with resourcing universal primary and secondary education. However, an increase in awareness on the importance of higher education in sustainable development is putting the sector back into the policy limelight (Boni et al.,2016).

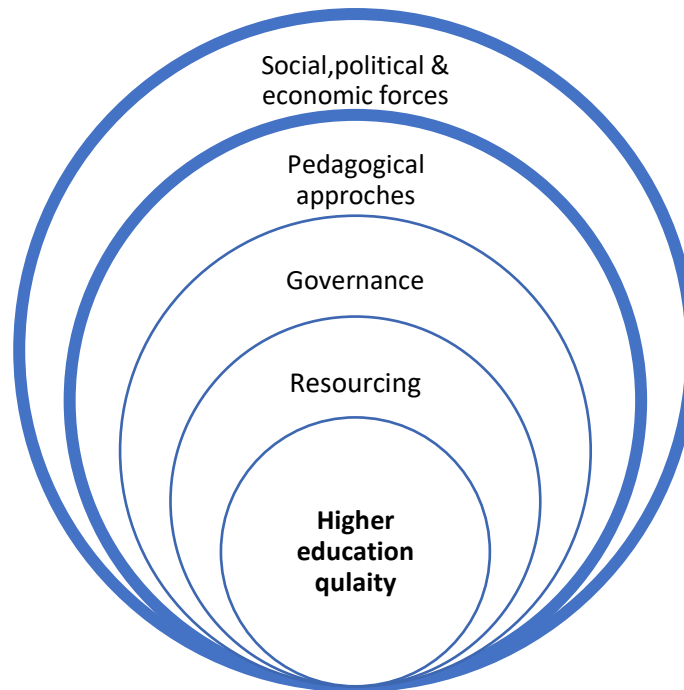
2.9 Impediments to higher education quality in Kenya

A literature analysis indicates to there being huge impediments to safeguarding quality in Kenya's higher education institutions. McCowan (2018) broadly groups these impediments into three categories. These are those related to resourcing constraints and a general lack investments in higher education institutions. Those relating to the system and how individual higher education institutions are run particularly about how academic staff are deployed and their career incentives. Then those related to the dominant approaches to teaching and learning, the modes of student assessment and the interactions and relations between the

teaching staff and students. These factors are in turn, underscored by deeper political, cultural and economic forces as depicted in the figure 1 below. Each of the three categories are comprised of themes and subcategories that are discussed below.

Figure 1

Factors influencing higher education quality in Kenya (McCowan,2018)



2.9.1 Resourcing

Adequate public funding to public higher education institutions is critical in ensuring that these institutions have sufficient staff and physical infrastructure to support their teaching, research, and community engagement activities. When allocating financial resources, it is critical to consider not only the amount available nationally for higher education but also equitable allocation and effective distribution of these financial resources within and between higher education institutions (Sitati,2017). According to Nyangau (2014), the level of higher education resourcing has yet to even reach a minimum acceptable level. McCowan (2018) maintains that the rapid surge in student enrolments without a corresponding increase in investment has led to a drop in the level of resourcing per student. Resourcing problems are to a large extent less severe in private higher education institutions notwithstanding the fact that a significant portion of these also suffer from inadequate physical infrastructure (Odhiambo,2014a).

Exponential growth in demand for higher education vis-à-vis declining public funding

Nyangau (2014) sees massification as the most fundamental problem facing Kenya's public higher education system and the underlying catalyst for other problems. Kenya is a crucial example in the relation to the challenge of safeguarding higher education quality in the wake of massification, as the sector experienced a somewhat late development. As late as the 1980's, the country had only one major higher education institution; the University of Nairobi. However, because of increased public demand and the need to grow the country's human capital, the number of universities has increased tremendously ever since to 63 and student enrolments growing three-fold in the last decade alone from 218,628 in 2011 to 564,507 in 2019 (McCowan,2018). Helen (2016) identifies key factors responsible for this trend as demographic growth and high secondary school completion rates therefore more young people seeking admissions into higher education institutions. However, such a rapid expansion has not been matched by a commensurate expansion in higher education infrastructure and teaching staff as a result greatly compromised higher education quality (Helen,2016).

A popular policy response employed by the ministry of higher education to cope with the rapid surge in demand for higher education has been to have public universities annually doing double intakes (Nyangau,2014). Double intakes are a political strategy wherein the government further props up public universities to take in as many students as possible that meet the minimum admission qualifications (Odhiambo,2011; Wangenge-Ouma,2007). However, this surge in enrolment comes at a time when the amount funding public universities receive from state has been on a steady decline, something that has compelled them to seek alternative sources of revenue (Sitati,2017). Consequently, a common strategy Kenya's public universities have been implementing is offering 'parallel' degree programs which allows higher education institutions to admit students who opt to cater for their full cost of attendance on top of those receiving government sponsorship. Past studies (Sifuna,2010; Nyangau,2014) depict a scenario where self-sponsored parallel degree programs' students are the new majority. This tremendous expansion in undergraduate higher education coupled with declining state funding has translated to a scenario where an increasing number of students are being admitted to higher education institutions that

initially are designed to accommodate far fewer student numbers. Emanating from this is crisis of overcrowding which is so severe it is a norm to find students standing outside lecture rooms during lectures or even perched on windows (Nyangau,2014). It is uncommon to for the periods between lectures to very chaotic as students concurrently attempt to vacate and fill lecture halls sometimes having to jump through windows just to guarantee seats (Odhiambo,2011; Teferra & Altbach, 2004). Odhiambo (2011) opines that such factors point to the disturbing conclusion that Kenya's public higher education institutions churn out graduates who are poorly equipped to effectively compete In the modern global economy.

Kenyan higher education institutions have suffered from many years of underfunding as public funding of Kenya's public universities over the years has often been inadequate and unreliable. For instance, from 1996 to 2005 higher education funding as part of GDP averaged at 0.94 percent (Ouma,2007). Public budgetary allocation to universities has not increased at the same pace increases in student enrolments. As a result, Kenyan universities have been unable to sustain financing of much needed human as well as education resources (World Bank, 2019). Rapid expansion without commensurate increase in public funding has had a negative impact on higher education quality as it has left Kenyan universities in dire financial situations (Mitoko,2021). Findings from an audit of public universities conducted by the Commission for University Education in 2016, depict a very worrisome picture on the financial state of many of the country's public universities. Findings of this public audit show that most universities are operating on budget gaps some as large as US\$ 100 million (Mitoko,2021). The findings also listed 11 of the country's public universities as being insolvent. As seen in World Bank (2019), such huge budget deficits are really hampering efforts by universities to improve quality of learning and teaching in the wake of increases in student numbers.

Number academic personnel vis-à-vis huge teaching workload

Government statistics show that between the years 2011 and 2018, the number of academic teaching staff in many of the country's public universities has on average increased only by 13 percent whereas student enrolments increased fivefold (Nganga,2017). Even though there have been widespread efforts to recruit qualified staff as university faculty members, most of the country's public universities because of poor remuneration and the resultant brain drain

still do not have enough academic staff, something which has greatly hampered the quality of training offered in these institutions (Sitati,2017).

A recent study (World Bank,2019) shows that most the new universities commissioned in the last decade have less than five professors and almost half of the teaching staff in these public universities do not have PhDs. However, of the teaching staff in established universities, roughly 5 percent are associate or full professors and approximately 40 percent of teaching staff are doctoral degree holders (World Bank,2019). The direct consequence of this huge gap between student numbers and the available qualified staff is the soaring of student-teacher ratios over the years to almost 70:1 in many public universities (World Bank,2019). Moreover, the situation has been complicated by industrial actions which often cause frequent interruptions of university life. These perennial strikes in Kenyan public universities largely contribute to their low performance as almost yearly universities are forced to halt service delivery (World Bank,2019). A casing point in 2017 where a 54-day strike caused students to lose almost an entire trimester (Nganga,2017). Mitoko (2021) maintains that inadequate funding and the quality problems that stem from it could deny Kenya's and by an extension Africa's universities, places in the list of coveted world-class institutional rankings.

According to Chege (2015), huge workloads such as large classes coupled with non-commensurate monetary compensations gives very little time and creates very little incentive among teaching staff to develop their teaching practice. Inadequate remuneration of academic staff evidenced by perennial strikes and delays in salary payments are largely responsible for the exodus of teaching staff to universities and research institutions abroad (Chege,2015). As depicted in Helen (2016), shortage of academic staff and inadequate government funding have prompted many Kenyan public universities to attract more privately sponsored students on top of government sponsored students. However, as these public universities try improving revenue streams by attracting more private fee-paying students, they have often been accused of sidestepping set quality assurance mechanisms (Wanzala,2013). This is because many public universities in the wake of increased student numbers often do not hire more teaching staff to meet the set teacher-student ratios as well as engage professional bodies whose courses they offer (Wanzala,2013). In recent years, there have been a myriad of cases of professional bodies such as the Engineering Board of

Kenya (EBK) declining to issue certificates of practice to graduates from these universities (Odhiambo, 2014_b). To achieve better learning outcomes, it is imperative to improve working conditions, invest in training of more academic staff as well as support their professional development (Chege,2015). Across most of Kenya’s higher education institutions, pedagogical approaches have largely remained traditional characterized by rote learning, outdated curricula as well as teaching techniques and assessments that often tend to be overly theoretical (World Bank,2019). All these factors have left many universities unable to uphold high quality learning and teaching standards.

Physical infrastructure

Inadequate facilities such as libraries, modern technological infrastructure and high student teacher ratios are identified key barriers to the quest by universities to offer high quality education (McCowan,2018). The consequences of these barriers have been a compromise of higher education quality in the pursuit of institutional financial survival (Helen,2016). McCowan (2018, p.4) argues that quality problems have caused a general dissatisfaction with the “product of higher education”; referring to the graduates who subsequently move on into society and the labour market. A recent study (Mamabolo & Myres,2020) shows that almost half of all fresh university graduates lack crucial skills to allow them work and compete effectively in their areas of study. The country is putting a lot of emphasis on the importance of higher education in achieving national development goals. This is evidenced in the country’s development blueprint “Vision 2030” which places significant emphasis on high level skill development in crucial fields such as technological innovation (Owuor,2012). The Commission for University Education which is the intermediate government agency tasked with regulation and enforcing quality standards in the sector has in the recent past implemented several measures to ensure the presence of quality assurance processes in every university (Chege,2015). However, focus seems to have largely been on the quality assurance and not quality enhancement as recommendations from quality assurance reports are often not been acted on (McCowan,2018). Odhiambo (2014_a) argues that the country requires well-defined policies that reward and retain qualified academic staff as well as guide the expansion of higher education. This is because the recent expansion characterized by the creation of many new public universities has often been politically instigated and not based

on relevance as well as quality of programs to be offered. According to McCowan (2018), more initiatives should be put in place to enhance learning and teaching in the already existing universities such as the establishment of centres of excellence and more collaboration with reputable higher education institutions overseas. McCowan (2018) maintains that despite there being consensus on the part of all stakeholders on the need to improve quality of higher education, very little seems to be taking place in this regard.

A recent study (World Bank,2021) found over 60 percent of Kenya's working age population unable to infer the most basic of information from relatively simple text. The study further shows that a huge skills gap perpetuates poverty and inequality and skills development, when done right could lead to a great reduction of unemployment as well as underemployment. Consequently, increasing graduate employability by enhancing the overall quality of higher education can greatly increase productivity and raise living standards in the country (Boni et al.,2016). Odhiambo (2011) explores the struggles and challenges Kenya's higher education sector faces as it tries to develop mechanisms for quality assurance. These challenges include rapidly diminishing income, political interference, brain drain, and negative aspects occasioned by globalization. These challenges have resulted in a gradual drop in the quality of higher education and left the sector hanging on a thread as the author puts it. Odhiambo (2011) maintains that Kenya's higher education sector is in dire need of clear policies of not only rewarding and retaining talented academic staff but also strategies of dealing with politically instigated expansion. Quality assurance is thought might play a crucial role in initiating such reforms.

2.9.2 Governance

Resources can only work to bolster the quality of higher education if they are allocated efficiently and effectively. McCowan (2018) maintains that there is need for Kenya's higher education institutions to be managed effectively even more so in the context of resource constraints. Governance relates in part on the national level as well as the steering of individual higher education institutions and participation of key stakeholders. Key issues touching on higher education governance include commercialization of higher education,

quality assurance and quality enhancement, corruption, academic staff engagement and student empowerment (McCowan, 2016a).

Marketization and commercialization of higher education

It is not possible to discuss issues and questions pertaining to higher education quality in Kenya without acknowledging the broader backdrop of commercialization and marketization (Oketch, 2016). Even though private sector liberalization and greater public institution autonomy to explore alternative income generation streams has led to a rapid increase in the number of higher education slots, it has to a large extent failed to maintain an adequate quality of higher education provision (Ounda & Jowi, 2012). To put this more bluntly is that increased competition between higher education providers has not rooted out poor higher education quality products as should have been the case. A higher education degree in Kenya still has a considerable value and in many cases real value even when it was gained with little or no meaningful learning (McCowan, 2018). Moreover, instead of the country instituting a well thought out nationwide plan for student numbers their distribution across disciplines, uncontrolled commercialization has precipitated a mad rush by higher education institutions to offer courses in any discipline where there is a perceived market for students notwithstanding institutional capacities to give quality offerings and the employment opportunities for students thereafter (Chege, 2015). Huge financial incentives to admit even greater student numbers is pushing higher education institutions to enroll students without the requisite preparation level (Wanzala, 2013). The minimum requirement to gain admission for most undergraduate degree programs in Kenya's universities is an overall grade 'C' in the national secondary school exam with a 'C plus' in Math and English. However, some universities blatantly disregard this rule as they seek to admit as many as students as possible (McCowan, 2016a). Just as is the case with physical resources, commercialization of student admissions and other entrepreneurial activities that have allowed universities to rope in additional funds have not always led to improvements in teaching and learning quality.

Quality assurance mechanisms

Numerous steps have been implemented to assure quality in the Kenyan higher education system, and pertinent organizations have been set up at the institutional, national, and regional levels. However, action has mostly been focused on "quality assurance" rather than

"quality enhancement" (McCowan & Brewis, 2016; Odhiambo, 2014), placing emphasis on course validation, accreditation, and audit procedures rather than helping lecturers enhance their teaching practice and students improve their learning. Even though the Commission for University Education (CUE) requires universities to have a director of quality assurance and procedures in relation to program delivery and evaluation the commission is perceived in past studies (Oketch,2016; Owuor,2012) as lacking expertise on issues of teaching and learning and as placing a strong emphasis on traditional exams. Chege (2015) asserts that there appears to be a discrepancy between the official standards for quality and what actually occurs in institutions. For instance, the Commission for Higher Education has regulations on the maximum student-lecturer ratio, which range from 1:7 for medical sciences to 1:18 for social sciences. However, previous research (McCowan,2016_a; Sitati,2017) has shown that no public university in Kenya is adhering to these regulations. However, several public universities, including Kenyatta University, University of Nairobi, Moi University, and some private universities such as Daystar University, have lately established teaching and learning support units or Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning. These departments offer staff professional development workshops, pedagogy and assessment guidance, peer observations, and occasionally other duties including organizing student course evaluations (McCowan,2018).

In addition, several universities are creating official certifications in higher education teaching and learning. For instance, Daystar University is creating a postgraduate diploma, while Strathmore University has created a new certificate for education in academic practice. These are positive developments that have facilitated the emergence of cutting-edge instructional strategies locally. However, there is still a chronic dearth of teaching and learning support throughout the system. With the exception of universities with specialized teaching and learning facilities, the majority of institutions only provide an initial induction day. Several factors, including a shortage of staff members, inadequate training of the existing employees, and lack of funding, limit the usefulness of centres even in universities that have them (McCowan,2018; McCowan & Brewis, 2016; Odhiambo, 2014).

Corruption

Several colleges, most notably the Nairobi Aviation College, were found to be selling degrees, according to an investigative study (Okari & Maina, 2015) that was published in Kenya's Daily Nation newspaper in 2015. In the exposé, a college lecturer admitted to questionably assisting hundreds of students in obtaining certificates without them ever attending class. Even if blaming corruption might occasionally assist to divert attention away from the more fundamental causes of issues with political and economic organization, it is crucial to recognize its applicability to the problem of the calibre of higher education in Kenya. In recent years, the Commission for University Education has become increasingly active in this area. For instance, in 2015, the Commission was successful in closing several local universities which were trying to sell its courses while not being registered (McCowan,2018).

First, the existence of diploma mills and fake degrees of the kind described above; second, and most frequently, misconduct in relation to assessments; are mentioned as pertinent corruption-related issues in Kenya's higher education system (McCowan & Brewis 2016). In some instances, there is a lack of trust in evaluation processes or outright exam misconduct involving grade manipulation (Oketch,2016). For instance, Okari & Maina (2015) in their investigative piece recorded a professor who profitably sold course note packs to students, thereby pressuring them to do so if they wished to pass a test. Another issue that has historically been a source of controversy is political meddling in higher education, particularly in the years prior to 2002 when institutional autonomy was severely restricted (Odhiambo 2011; Sifuna 2010),

Academic staff engagement

The status, working conditions, management, and support of academic personnel were among the several factors identified in literature in this regard. Lecturers typically do not have a lot of support, financial incentives, or free time to improve their teaching methods (Nyangau,2014). First, the focus of promotion requirements is primarily on research, with little attention paid to teaching; at some Kenyan universities, just 20 percent of evaluations are based on this factor (Odhiambo 2014). McCowan (2016_a) opines that giving research funds and papers the most weight in academic promotions is likely not unique to Kenya. This

problem is being partially addressed by the creation of new qualifications for teaching and learning, as well as by the growing focus on course evaluations, but tighter ties with improving teaching quality are required. As a result, workload is a major problem that is made worse by the issues of poor pay, working multiple jobs, and rising enrolment (Sifuna,2010; Wangenge-Ouma, 2012). As a result, academic staff members have little free time to participate in professional development events. In their study, Arasa and Calvert (2013) discovered that while professors did appreciate teaching highly, extra paid teaching work and obligations outside of the university prohibited them from devoting enough time to it. All these things are thought to undermine academic staff engagement. These factors have led to a situation where a majority of academic staff members avoid participating in professional development activities, unless they are made mandatory and stick to the barest minimum of acceptable teaching obligations because they feel excluded from decision-making and undervalued (Arasa & Calvert,2013).

Student engagement

As was previously highlighted, one of the main barriers to quality improvement is institutions' lack of stakeholder engagement. The students themselves are a crucial constituency in this sense in addition to lecturers. Even when they have a variety of significant issues, students are reluctant to voice them publicly, as a prior study (McCowan, 2016_a) has demonstrated. Despite having formal representation on university boards and committees, students lack avenues to voice their opinions and have them taken seriously. This lack of channels has occasionally caused discontent to escalate to violent unrest (Nganga,2017). Most universities do in fact employ course assessments. These give students the chance to offer comments on the effectiveness of the teaching and curriculum as well as their experiences with a particular module. According to Odhiambo (2014), the information gathered from the assessments and sent to the departments and lecturers has occasionally resulted in the inclusion of instructional assistance and the development of new techniques. As a result, they play a crucial role in assuring quality. The success of these evaluations is, however, subject to several restrictions. Given the deeper disempowerment of students mentioned above, there are first concerns about the veracity of the student opinions expressed.

Odhiambo (2014) asserts that, students are occasionally unsure of the feedback's anonymity. Additionally, because students' primary interest is in successfully completing the course, they will unavoidably be influenced by the possible impact on their own grade just as much as by a dispassionate desire to make the course better for a future cohort of students. Therefore, less strenuous classes with assured marks might receive favourable reviews, whereas harder pedagogical experiences with significantly richer learning outcomes might not. Mid-term evaluations have been suggested as a solution to this problem (McCowan,2018). Last but not least, there have been reports of lecturers deleting unfavourable feedback forms before turning them in to the office. These constraints are not unique to Kenya by any means; they are a feature of all formal education integrating competitive marking systems with the goal of delivering worthwhile educational opportunities to all students (McCowan,2016a). There is also the larger issue of a certain level of acquiescence between students and their institutions, which may be a trait shared by all systems of higher education to some extent (Odhiambo,2014). Students have an interest in defending the quality of their institution, even if they do not completely believe in it, due to the value placed on the degree certificate as validation of one's learning and the dependence of the reputation of that degree on the university's image (Odhiambo,2011;2014).

The potential gap between actual learning and the granting of the degree is a related and possibly more serious point. Students have no motivation to complain about absent lecturers, packed classes, and a lack of learning tools if they are convinced that they will graduate from college with the necessary degree, which is more important than learning anything useful (Mitoko,2021). Given the blatant threats of withholding the degree made to several student activists across the African continent, there is even less chance that they will speak out about these issues (Akalu,2014).

2.9.3 Pedagogical approaches

The third of the three aspects has to do with the actual methods of teaching and learning, the larger scope of the curriculum, and crucially, the set of shared values and connections that underpin those methods. According to Schendel (2016), adopting progressive educational

approaches by academic departments is insufficient without a more thorough process of changing lecturers' cultural perspectives and working methods.

Curriculum relevance in Kenya's higher education institutions

In the context of this research, a comprehensive review of the curriculum in Kenyan universities is not feasible, however a few quick remarks shall be made. In Kenya's national conversation, there is a great deal of concern about employability issues and ill-equipped graduates, and to some extent at least, these issues are attributed to the curriculum's relevance, to the courses' lack of awareness of changes in the employment market and changes in industry, as well as to the detachment of academic knowledge from application in real-life situations (McCowan,2016a; Mitoko,2021). Professional organizations have on occasion declined to recognize degrees (McCowan,2018). There are still noticeable variations between discipline fields in terms of knowledge application and integration with the workplace (McCowan & Brewis,2016). Business studies makes heavy use of case studies and health-related programs have been proactive in adopting problem-based learning (for instance, at Moi University). Even highly practical courses, like agriculture or project management, sometimes lack a practical component, which is frequently made worse by a lack of resources (McCowan & Brewis,2016).

Past studies (McCowan,2016a; 2016b) note two distinct tendencies in terms of course distribution in Kenya's higher education institutions. The first is what is referred to as "program isomorphism" (Wangenge-Ouma, 2012.p.6). This is a situation where new entrants to the higher education space end up copying the types of courses offered by the more well-established institutions out of a desire for reputation and emulation—and in some circumstances, purely for commercial gain. This tendency inhibits the sector from diversifying in a favourable way by ensuring that institutions have unique philosophies and course offerings. As a result, technical institutions in especially begin to resemble academic ones. Additionally, the majority of the newly available courses have been in the applied social sciences, leaving a gap in the fields of natural science and engineering, which require additional infrastructure (Oanda & Jowi 2012). The second, seemingly incompatible trend is known as "course splintering" (McCowan & Brewis,2016a). In this situation, universities will

divide a single topic into several more specialized courses solely to capitalize on commercial opportunities, making the courses overly specialized to be useful for work in the future or at least adding little value (Odhiambo,2014).

One last issue on curriculum relevance has to do with the lack of a more extensive campus-wide as well as off-campus learning experience. There is a dearth of extracurricular activities, including sports, creative and artistic interests, in addition to support services like career guidance and counselling, the only exception being the prestigious Nairobi-based higher education institutions (Arasa & Calvert,2013). This is a concerning situation, especially for lower-income students who frequently are deprived of access to these activities outside of the institution, given the importance of these activities in increasing students' employability and overall civic engagement (Arasa & Calvert,2013).

Teaching techniques in Kenya's higher education institutions

It is unquestionably morally incorrect to promote generalized preconceived notions about pedagogy in African universities and colleges as many professors in some of the continent's higher education institutions make use of cutting-edge techniques to provide students with a stimulating and engaging learning environment (Teferra & Altbach,2004; Akalu,2014). However, it is apparent that transmission pedagogy predominates in many of Kenya's higher education institutions (Odhiambo,2014; McCowan,2016a). The trend where university lecturers give classroom lectures for years or in some cases even decades using the same old material is all too common in Kenya's higher education institutions (McCowan & Brewis, 2016). There are many different factors that contribute to the adoption of transmission pedagogy. These factors include both micro and macro-political oftentimes linked with governance and resource allocation (Nyangau,2014).

It is believed that having personalized interactions is impossible in large courses with large class sizes (Odhiambo,2011). Resources do not, however, determine pedagogy alone. Along with the prevailing pedagogical and cultural viewpoints and trends, teaching techniques are also influenced by the type, availability, and staff development programs (Chege,2015). Adoption of learner-centric pedagogies is extremely challenging where teachers have deeper

views that are at odds with the guiding principles, as has been observed in relation to Kenya's university lecturers (Mitoko,2021). McCowan (2016a) argues that deference to authority is one cultural trait that has been identified as an obstacle to reforming higher education in Kenya. The Kenyan society is hierarchical, especially in terms of age but also in terms of position seniority. This might serve to suppress individuals in lower positions and prevents the type of open discourse environment that is necessary for the growth of critical learners (McCowan,2016a). It can also be used to silence dedicated staff members who are attempting to implement new teaching and learning techniques outside of the classroom. Speaking up is feared both vertically with peers and horizontally with hierarchies. In a similar vein, Chege (2015) points to lecturers' anxiety over being observed by their peers as a roadblock to improving their teaching methods.

While exaggerating the relationship between age and pedagogical style may be misleading, McCowan (2016a) notes that older lecturers are less likely than younger lecturers to employ learner-centric pedagogies. This is related in certain cases to the specific issue of career stage, with more seasoned academics having less incentive to attend classes because they do not require them for promotion. Continuous professional development of teaching personnel is essential to transformation in the curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment aspects outlined above. While most institutions provide new hire orientation programs and some ongoing teaching-related training, Mitoko (2021) points out that there are still many gaps in the market. Even when there is a provision, academic personnel frequently do not really take advantage of it. In addition to the time constraint highlighted above, there is also the issue of academic identities. Many academic staff members have an entrenched belief that their focus is to teaching excellence rather than to the highest calibre scholarship in their field of study (Arasa & Calvert,2013). The fact that research on teaching and learning in Kenya is still in its infancy and that there isn't much support for is an obstacle in this regard (Arasa & Calvert,2013). Oanda and Jowi (2012) argue that lecturers rarely have the time or knowledge to reflect upon their own teaching, which is true in many contexts. They are also rarely sufficiently conversant with the research and concepts in this field (Oanda & Jowi,2012).

Deeply entrenched exam culture

The perceived culture of exams is a major impediment to the development of more effective education, according to McCowan and Brewis (2016.p.8). Exams remain to be the “be all end all” for verifying students' knowledge, even though they rarely account for all of the student evaluation in university courses (often, 70 percent will be granted for the major exam and 30 percent for ongoing assessment). This Infatuation with exams is perceived to start at the Commission for University Education level and proceed all the way down to the faculty and departmental levels of Kenya's universities (Sifuna,2010; Wangege-Ouma,2012). According to McCowan (2018), this leads to a more fundamental query about the relationship to knowledge. McCowan (2016a) draws attention to unfavourable exam-related behaviours, including marking that emphasizes the repetition of some important ideas, in addition to the prevalence of a deeply ingrained obsession with exams. When tests are used as the main form of evaluation, there is a greater emphasis on memorization and faithful reproduction than on critical inquiry and creative participation (McCowan,2016a).

Chapter 3: Analytical Framework

3.1 Context

The analytical framework developed from the literature review and depicted in figure 2 below for this research forms basis for the data gathering and analysis in the research methodology section. There are two main theories in the literature that address graduate employability considering the renewed emphasis on this topic. These are human capital theory and job signalling theory. Human capital theory and the job signalling theory have been at odds for many years about the economic function of higher education. According to the human capital theory, higher education makes students more productive, which explains, among other things, why graduates make more money than non-graduates (Becker 1964; Schultz, 1961). According to the job signalling theory, a college education can identify people who are highly productive without necessarily increasing their perceived future productivity to employers (Arrow, 1993; Stiglitz, 1975). Additionally, this explains why graduates typically make more money than non-graduates (Arrow, 1993).

For the following three groups: the government, universities, and university students, graduate employability is crucial. Government is interested in the nature of the relationship between higher education and productivity because it wants to bolster the population's material well-being by making significant investments in higher education (Chantrill, 2012). Because these ideas have various consequences for funding as well as the curriculum, including the importance that should be given to assessment, balance of subjects, and employability in the curriculum, they are significant to universities (McAuthur et al.,2017). Students meanwhile should be mindful about it because it has serious career trajectory implications (Mainga et al.,2022).

3.2 Human capital theory in higher education research

In numerous empirical investigations, a high correlation between higher education and labour income has been shown. Using cross-sectional data from the US Census, Mincer's (1958) key study computed log-linear earnings equations and discovered that an extra year of schooling is connected to a total combined rise of 11.5 percent in yearly income. More recent research from the UK found that each extra year of full-time education increased

incomes by eight percent, which is largely in line with findings from several countries within the OECD (Kirby & Riley, 2008). With a range of data sources and estimating methodologies, subsequent researchers have examined the relationship between earning and schooling and have repeatedly discovered a substantial correlation (Arrow,1993). Both Schultz (1961) and Becker (1964) contend that higher education directly increases a student's ability for productivity. This human capital concept contends that worker pay reflects productivity, which accounts for the relationship between earnings and educational attainment. Kirby and Riley (2008) contend that a country's human and physical capital stock has a significant impact on how well it runs and how prosperous it is. According to the authors, industrial production facilities like machinery, waste infrastructure, transportation, and buildings are examples of physical capital. So, an investment made by individuals to increase their productivity in the economy is referred to as human capital.

Human capital theory provides the most comprehensive explanation of the relationship between higher education institutions and labour market outcomes. The human capital theory is based on the conventional economic theory of behaviour, which contends that people act with the intention of continuously maximizing their own interests or gains (Becker,1964). According to this viewpoint, individuals use market data to make logical decisions on the most profitable course of action. In terms of higher education, this means that students choose their academic programs and locations to maximize their economic worth and the return on their educational investment (Tight,2018). The HCT hypothesis contends that an investment in one's education ultimately influences one's place in the labour market and returns. According to Tight (2018, p. 4), investing in one's education can boost productivity and efficiency for the human capital theory. This theory gives the research a foundation because it gives a basis for analysing the connection between higher education and the personal, economic, and social benefits it brings. This notion is based on the idea that earning more education translates into earning more money. This study aims to ascertain whether the impediments to higher education quality in Kenya directly affect employability of university graduates. This idea therefore enables this research to examine if the quality of higher education graduates receive affects their ability to compete in the job market.

3.3 Job signaling theory in higher education research.

The job signalling theory posed a challenge to the human capital theory. Employers utilize educational attainment to identify people with certain valued intrinsic features that cannot be clearly observed, according to Arrow (1993). It is stated that education does not in and of itself increase productivity; rather, employers consider education as a measure of a candidate's prospective productivity, including their capacity for on-the-job learning (Spence,1973). According to this theory, incomes increase with education because more able people use education less inefficiently and hence acquire more of it. This is especially important in higher education, where it is argued that students that possess better cognitive abilities complete degrees at higher levels (Spence,1973),

The higher education system also offers other indicators that are pertinent to employer preferences, such as the perceived standing of the university from which a degree is earned, the course taken, and the degree's class (Arrow,1993) These might give employers more clues about a candidate's prospective productivity. Kirby and Riley (2008) opine that degrees earned, for example, from the UK higher education system may have been considered the selection of an elite cohort of very talented individuals as recently as the early 1980s. A university degree obtained in the UK would therefore send a clear message to employers that the graduate applicant was highly talented, and that their initial and ongoing productive capacity, boosted by on-the-job training, would be used efficiently due to the employees' expected high capability.

3.4 Critical evaluation of human capital and job signaling theories.

Schooling appears to have a favourable impact on individual's employment prospects, according to both the human capital and job signalling theories. However, it is still unclear what factors are most important to employers when making hiring decisions. The findings of several empirical investigations on the implications of both human capital and job signalling theories have been the subject of a protracted discussion (Cai,2012). This is because studies using either the signalling theory or the theory of human capital have faced criticism for only focusing on the relationship between educational attainment and monetary compensation and paying little consideration to employers' perceptions (Cai,2012). Employers' viewpoints are critical when it comes to the shift from education to the workplace, as shown in Cai (2012).

The expected abilities that people acquire from their education are the main subject of many studies (Bremer, 1998; Crossman & Clarke, 2010) evaluating employers' perceptions of the relevancy of international education experience to employment. They consider educational output as a material that can be defined and quantified objectively, but they have not progressed beyond either a human capital or signalling paradigm in this regard. In contrast, Bailly (2008) adopts a "non-substantialist" conceptualization of educational output that places a significant focus on employers' perceptions. Bailly (2008) believes that educational product, as opposed to being a substance, is open to several interpretations.

The importance of education in labour market results is that it either develops students' productivity-enhancing skills or indicates the graduates' intrinsic ability to employers, according to human capital theory and signalling theory, both of which Bailly considers to be substantialist approaches. But, according to Bailly (2008), the employers' worldviews and belief systems determine whether the signalling and human capital hypotheses are true. Bailly's approach supports the claim made by social and cognitive psychologists that people choose and process information using taxonomies, cognitive frameworks, or value systems (Simon, 1957). Value systems influence an individual's conscious, and as the conscious is controlled by these value systems, they also influence the hiring decisions of employers.

3.5 Analytical framework explained.

This empirical study develops an analytical framework (*shown in Figure 2 below*) from the body of current literature that incorporates the major challenges to high-quality higher education and associated effects on graduate employability. The formal hypotheses derived from previous research are also included in the research model. Empirical data from a survey of business graduates in Kenya, an emerging economy and developing country, is used to assess the impact of these factors on graduate employability. The challenges Kenyan universities face in achieving and maintaining a high standard of teaching and learning have been attributed to three key variables. These elements include resourcing [physical infrastructure and staffing], governance [organizational frameworks and stakeholder involvement, quality assurance, over marketization of higher education, corruption] and pedagogical culture [social hierarchies and approaches to teaching, curriculum and assessment]. The considerable interplay between the three factors resourcing, governance,

and pedagogical culture must be emphasized while classifying them. It is challenging to implement student-centred pedagogy at universities in low-income countries with very large class sizes because of a lack of resources, as is shown in the literature on the challenges of doing so (McCowan,2018). Lack of trust and motivation on the side of academic personnel as a result of poor governance and inadequate pay undermines efforts to guarantee continued professional development and high standards of practice. In some circumstances, bad governance and inadequate provision may make it more difficult for universities to secure funding from the public and private sectors. Or, to put it more positively, it can be argued that these three issues (resourcing, governance, and pedagogical culture) are mutually reinforcing, meaning that once one starts to improve, the others will follow. Ultimately, it is believed that these factors combined adversely affect graduate employability.

According to the results of a previous study (Yasan,2001), parents' education level positively affects students' academic ability and achievement. More educated parents tend to raise students who do better as it is believed they encourage them to take more initiative and responsibility in pursuing their career aspirations. The findings of Yasan (2001), demonstrate how important socioeconomic issues are in determining a student's potential and academic success. Graduate employability is greatly enhanced by relevant work experience because it helps students develop the proper professional identity and mindset, which is essential given the intersubjective nature of what makes a graduate employable before they enter the labour market (Byrne,2020). As depicted in Mainga et al. (2022), graduate responsibility and perceived employability are other factors that are thought to influence graduate employability.

The factors presented in the developed analytical framework (depicted in figure 2) can be categorised into 3 layers that all seem to build on each other. The first layer of factors (graduate responsibility and perceived employability) which determine graduate employability have to do with the individual graduates themselves. The best a higher education institution can do with regard to these factors is to provide a conducive environment that facilitates initiative and self-drive on the part of learners. The second layer of factors have to do with the higher education environment learners operate in. The effect of these factors (resourcing, governance & pedagogical factors) on graduate employability is compounded and made more

pronounced by massification of higher education and the occasioned higher education quality decline. Labour market outcomes are the outermost layer. Here higher education quality is seen from the lens of its ability to impart learners crucial employability skills, attributes, behaviours and competencies and ultimately transforming them into highly productive and sought after graduates. Despite multiple and sometimes critical scholarly perspectives on the pros and cons of human capital and job signalling theories, the common thread in these two theories remains that a positive correlation exists between higher education quality and labour market productivity. Utilising this analytical framework to analyse these factors and ascertain their level of influence on graduate employability, would not only be crucial in guiding action on the part policy makers and higher education practitioners but also form basis for further future research on this subject area.

The regression model below best illustrates this relationship between the variables. Parents' education level and graduate work experience for purposes of this research are treated as mediating independent variables as they indirectly influence graduate employability through graduate responsibility and graduate's perceived employability respectively.

$$Y = \delta + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \dots + \beta_t X_t + \varepsilon$$

Where Y=Graduate employability

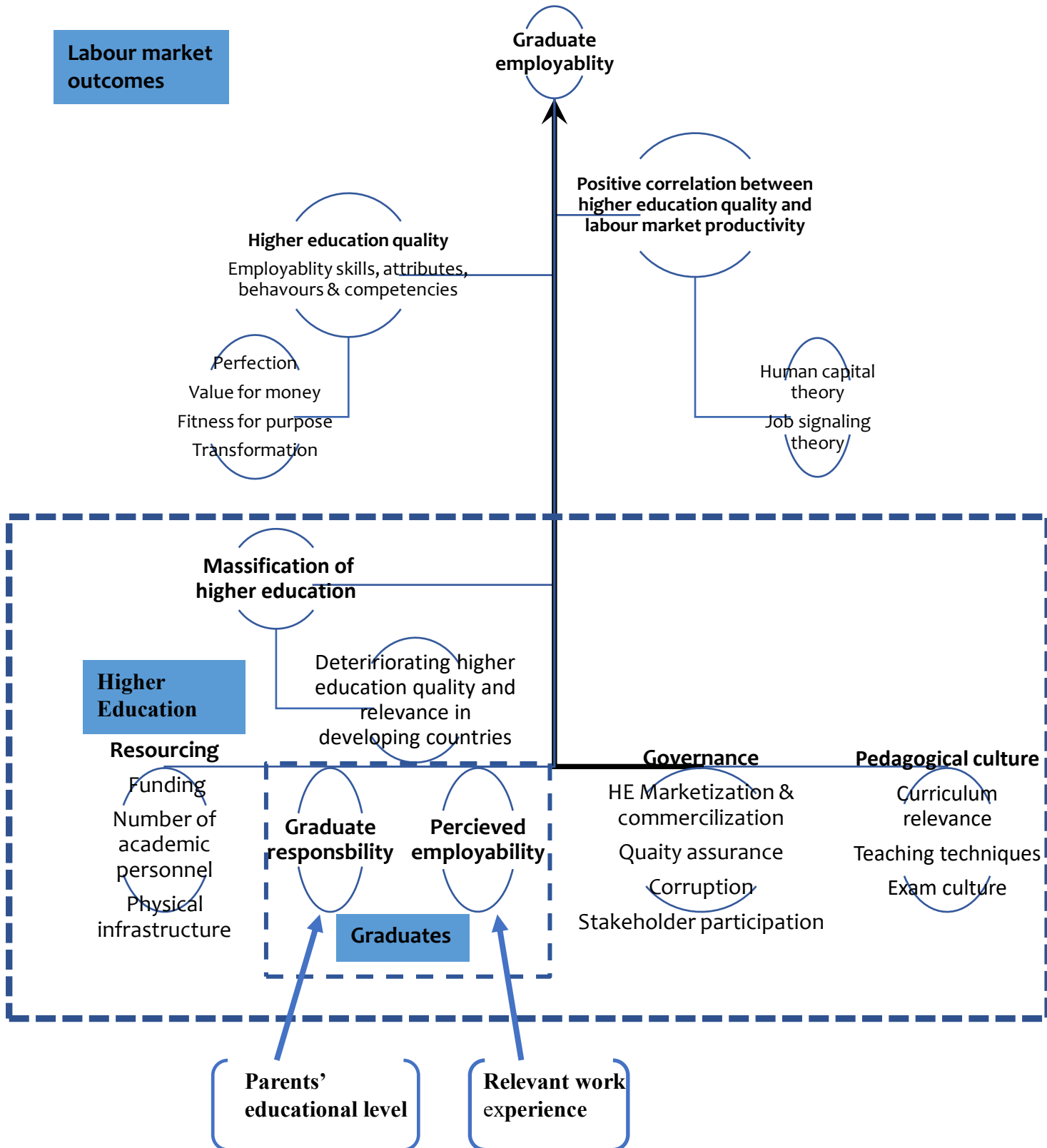
X=The explanatory (independent) variable(s) being used to predict or being associated with graduate employability

δ =The y-intercept

β =(beta coefficient) is the slope of the explanatory variable(s)

ε =The regression residual or error term

Figure 2
Analytical Framework (developed by author)



Chapter 4: Research Methodology & Design

4.1 Research Methodology

This research utilizes a quantitative approach as it is guided by the basic ontological premise that knowledge about the phenomenon under investigation already exists out there objectively. Because knowledge about the phenomenon exists out there, it is encompassed upon the researcher to use objective data collection methods such as survey techniques to accept or refute research hypotheses (Shaw,2018). Worldviews are a fundamental set of beliefs that direct action or generally conceived research techniques. They are sometimes referred to as broadly conceived research paradigms/methodologies and epistemologies (Creswell,2018). This research is epistemologically guided by a postpositivist theoretical perspective. A postpositivist theoretical perspective operates under the premise that causes inevitably lead to consequences or outcomes (Shaw,2018). As a result of this, postpositivist research reflects the necessity to recognise and evaluate the factors influencing a given phenomenon. It is also reductionistic because the goal is to condense the concepts into a manageable number of distinct hypotheses and research questions, or variables.

Key presuppositions of a postpositivist research paradigm that have been depicted in Phillips and Burbules (2000) include:

1. Knowledge is speculative (and antifoundational); there is no such thing as absolute truth. As a result, research-based evidence is never flawless and never reliable. For this reason, researchers claim that their findings do not demonstrate a hypothesis; rather, they show that the hypothesis cannot be ruled out.
2. Making assertions, then revising or dropping some of them in favour of others that are better supported by evidence, is the process of conducting research. For instance, the test of a theory comes first in the majority of quantitative studies.
3. Knowledge is shaped by facts, arguments, and logical considerations. In reality, the researcher gathers data on the instruments through surveys that participants fill out or observations that the researcher records.
4. The goal of research is to create meaningful, accurate statements that can be used to explain a problematic situation or to depict an important causal chain. Researchers advance

the relationship between variables in quantitative studies and pose this in the form of queries or hypotheses.

5. Being objective is a crucial component of effective research; researchers must check their results and techniques for bias. For instance, reliability and the norm of validity are crucial in quantitative research.

4.2 Research Design

Once the research questions and hypotheses are solidified, it is important to select a research design that will create a situation in which the hypotheses can be tested, and the research questions answered. A quantitative-post positivist research approach is used in this study. A post positivist paradigm to reiterate bases research on empirical data that is gathered using quantifiable techniques (Creswell,2018). Formal hypotheses are derived from higher education and graduate employability- related literature using a positivist research strategy, which also makes it easier to identify and adopt operationalization measures for the variables. To understand the context, an analytical framework is developed to identify factors affecting graduate employability. The fact that Kenya, where the study is being conducted, is a developing country makes it the ideal place to investigate how the stated barriers to high-quality university education affect the employability of business graduates.

The analytical framework aids in testing the hypotheses and assessing the relationships between the variables. The analytical framework later draws conclusions regarding the phenomena (i.e., factors affecting the employability of business graduates) using the data gathered from the sample. The key objective of this quantitative study is to relate graduate employability in Kenya's labour market to the key factors identified in the literature as hindering quality in the country's higher education institutions. These factors are level of resourcing [inadequate staffing & physical infrastructure], governance [weak organizational structures and low stakeholder participation], pedagogical factors [social hierarchies and outdated approaches to learning, curriculum design/teaching and assessment] (*independent variables*).The study includes graduate responsibility and graduates' perceived employability as additional independent variables; depicted in literature as having a positive impact on graduate employability.

Ideally, the research design should isolate these study variables and control for intervening variables so that the findings depict a true picture of the relationships being tested. In educational research however, it is extremely difficult to establish sufficient controls given the complex nature of the social settings being studied. In the case of this study for example graduate employability could also be a product of various factors some not related to the five identified. Therefore, the study strives to sufficiently identify and collect data on these other factors and control for them. For this study, a cross sectional survey design is used collect numerical data and analyse data to test the hypotheses and answer the main research question as well as sub questions. This research design is essential for gathering information from the specified respondents in a given point in time.

The main research question is 'Which factors significantly affect graduate employability in Kenya's labour market?' and the sub questions are 'Which employability skills do Kenya's university graduates perceive as most crucial when employers are making recruitment decisions?' and 'Which employability skills are perceived by Kenya's university graduates as fully developed at the time of graduation?' A cross sectional survey design is ideal as this quantitative study seeks to gather opinions and beliefs from university graduates at a given point in time about the impediments to getting quality university education. The study also seeks to gather opinions from university graduates on the extent to which university education equips them with the skills, attributes, behaviours and competencies needed to effectively compete in the job market. As depicted in Creswell (2018), surveys are an ideal quantitative study design choice as they offer an efficient yet economical way of gathering large amounts of data, like in this case as many university graduates as possible. Educational research often attempts to measure abstract variables such as opinions and beliefs which are hard to measure. Surveys, however, can capture data about this hard to measure variables as well other self-reported information such as demographic factors. Quantitative research surveys typically include questions that ask respondents to choose a rating from a scale, select one or more items from a list or other responses that result in numerical data (Creswell ,2018).

4.2.1 Target population

The target population of this study were 2785 students who graduated from the university of Nairobi 's faculty of business and economics with a Bachelor of Commerce degree in 2016. In the stated period, and even ever since, the University of Nairobi has been churning out around 3000 graduates annually with a Bachelor of Commerce degree with specializations that include finance, accounting, human resource management, procurement and supply chain management, computer information systems and operations management. The target population were both state sponsored as well as self-funded bachelor's degree business graduates of the university's faculty of business and economics. Graduates of the faculty of business and economics are selected purposely as it appears that the employability of business graduates has been most adversely impacted by the rapid expansion of the higher education sector (McCowan et al.,2016).

An examination of the degree programs offered by Kenya's higher education institutions, including the recently founded ones, reveals a trend towards more social science and humanities courses, which has resulted in some unnecessary duplication of subpar degree programs particularly in business-related degree programs (World Bank,2019). One of the most coveted and sought-after careers in the modern world is business management. As seen on Römgens et al.(2019),there are not many disciplines like business management that can give graduates such diverse and versatile career preparation options, positions, and responsibilities. Business management has always been a topic of study that is always evolving, and there are countless prospects for inquiry. Yet, as time has gone on, several new elements have emerged that have had an impact on the business management pitch and the employability of business management graduates. Consequently, it would be difficult for university business students who are unaware of the factors influencing the employability of business management graduates to keep up with the rate at which the business landscape is changing upon graduation.

According to a previous study (McCowan et al., 2016) commissioned by the British Council that looks into Kenya's employer satisfaction with graduates' attributes by disciplines, employers who had hired graduates in the social sciences and humanities fields were mostly

less satisfied that the graduates had the necessary skills and associated qualities like the graduates' calibre and were even much less satisfied with the speed with which course content in the countries higher education institutions was being revised to meet the changing labour market demands.

4.2.2 Sampling procedure

To collect data, a closed-ended questionnaire is administered to Bachelor of Commerce graduates from the University of Nairobi who have completed their business degrees and have been in search of employment or in and out of employment for at least five years. For this reason, only graduates who received their degrees in 2016 are chosen. Convenience sampling, a form of non-probability sampling technique, is used. In convenience sampling, individuals are chosen because they are willing and available to be studied by the researcher (Cresswell,2018). Graduates of the university with a Bachelor of Commerce degree who graduated in 2016 receive a link to the survey once it has been posted on Lime Survey. Several lecturers who may be connected to some of the graduates are provided the link and related material so they can let them know about the employability survey and offer them a link to the survey. One lecturer even makes it a point to promote the survey link in alumni social media pages and groups. All survey participants are provided with the assurance that their identities would not be disclosed to protect their privacy, win their trust, and ensure their anonymity. Potential responders were screened out by the first three questions, which included requirements for informed permission, legal age, and Bachelor of Commerce graduate status. Using the sample size calculation from Creswell (2018), a sample size of 353 was calculated. Below is a description of the formula:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

where N = target population, n = sample size, and e = error term

$$n = \frac{3000}{1 + 3000(0.05)^2}$$

Sample size (n)=353

4.2.3 Instrumentation

A survey was created and posted on Lime Survey. Demographic data, curriculum relevance, higher education governance aspects, general employability skills, academic skills, graduate responsibility [personal management skills and teamwork skills], teaching and learning methods, perceived employability, graduate employability and relevant work experience were the ten main elements of the questionnaire. The demographic data included inquiries about the respondent's department of study, their major, gender, whether they were employed, whether any or both of their parent held a first university degree, and the respondent's age. A list of crucial soft skills found in the literature was included in the general employability section and included things like communication skills, problem-solving abilities, teamwork skills, interpersonal skills, learning skills, positive behaviours, and attitudes, etc. The part on academic skills included a list of numerous skills that graduates are required to assess according to their level of development at the time of graduation. Critical and analytical thinking abilities, mathematical problem-solving abilities, the capacity to apply specialized knowledge from many domains, decision-making abilities, IT literacy abilities, and other abilities were on the list. Self-assurance, scrupulosity, self-awareness, the capacity to schedule and manage time, accountability, positive attitudes, and other traits were on the list of personal management talents. The section on graduate responsibility included questions on critical teamwork skills and personal management skills.

Graduate responsibility included two sections, one where graduates are asked to assess their level of development across a range of teamwork skills and the other an array of personal management skills. The section on teamwork skills covered abilities including the capacity to participate in group problem-solving, collaborate and arrive at decisions with others and support the results, respect the thoughts and viewpoints of group members, exhibit "give and take" to accomplish group results, team building skills, etc. Some of the elements that made up the perceived employability section required ratings ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), such as "I have achieved high grades in my studies" and "I regard my scholarly work to be of high quality." In the graduate employability section graduates are required to rate the extent to which they agree or disagree with two critical statements. These statements are "I was confident that I will secure graduate-level employment within half a year after graduation" and "The skills and abilities that I possess are what employers are

looking for.” In his study, Bennett (2018) finds that employers, graduates, and students all ranked "work experience" as the most important factor in determining a graduate's employability. Higher education professionals, however, gave other factors like career advice and extracurricular activities a higher priority.

The extra value of relevant work experience for graduate employability probably comes from its capacity to give current students a reservoir of occupation-specific information that a degree alone cannot equal. It also comes from the fact that it enables students to start creating a suitable "professional identity," which is vital given the intersubjective nature of what defines an employable graduate prior to actually entering the labour market (Bennett,2018). Work experience is therefore treated and measured as a control/mediating variable that affects graduate employability through its influence on graduates' perceived employability. To operationalize work experience and ascertain its bearing on graduate employability, participants are asked to rate the following statement in terms of 'always, most of the times, sometimes, rarely and never': Potential would be employers place significant weight on job candidates' relevant work experience when hiring for graduate entry-level job positions.

4.2.4 Statistical tools

This study utilizes the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) to conduct both descriptive and inferential data analysis. Creswell (2018) asserts that whereas inferential statistics uses sample data to generate educated guesses about the general population, descriptive statistics represent numbers summarizing the data collected to describe what happened in the sample in terms of its general characteristics. Statistical tests can be classified broadly in to two categories these being parametric and non-parametric tests.

Parametric statistical tests make several common assumptions regarding the data under consideration. If these assumptions are violated, the test may not hold true as the resulting p-value may not be accurate (Creswell,2018). These assumptions include:

- I. Independence of observations: The variables and observations you use in your test ought not to be related to one another (for instance, multiple tests conducted on the same test subject are not independent, whereas multiple tests conducted on numerous distinct test subjects are independent).

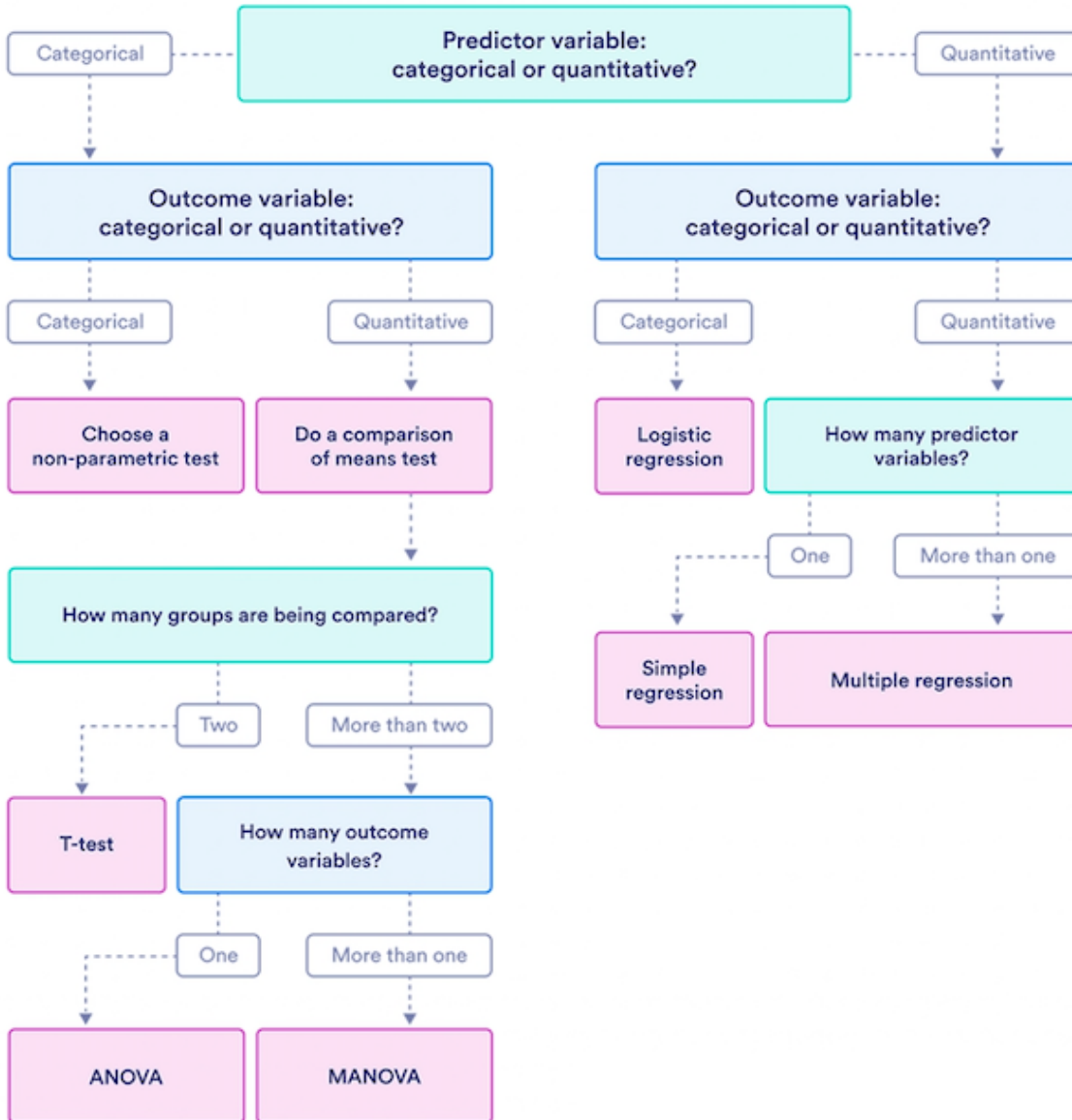
- II. The variance within each group that is being compared must be homogeneous, meaning that it should be comparable to the variance of the entire group. The efficiency of the test will be lowered if one group's variance is higher than that of the other(s).
- III. The distribution of the test is normally distributed (or bell-shaped), with a mean of 0, a standard deviation of 1, and a bell-shaped curve that is symmetrical. This is known as normality of data.

Meanwhile, nonparametric tests do not rely on any of these assumptions about the shape or distribution of the population. Regression tests and mean comparison tests are two of the most widely used parametric tests.

It is crucial to distinguish between the various types of variables since doing so will help in selecting the right statistical test to use as illustrated in figure 3. There are two major variable groups. These are quantitative and categorical variables (Creswell,2018). Quantitative variables are used to express amounts. There are two different sub types of quantitative variables (discrete and continuous). While discrete (interval) variables are used to describe counts and typically cannot be divided into units smaller than one, continuous (ratio) variables are used to describe measures and can typically be divided into units less than one. There are three basic forms of categorical variables, which express groupings of things. These are nominal (represent group names such as brands or species names), binary (represent data with a yes/no option), and ordinal (represent data with an order such as rankings).

Figure 3

Criteria for choosing statistical test (adapted from Bevans,2022)



This study's descriptive analysis will summarize the data from the variables' distribution angle primarily, and its inferential analysis will concentrate on multiple regression and analysis of variance (ANOVA). Regression is a parametric statistical technique for examining the correlation between a dependent variable and one or more independent variables (Collis & Hussey, 2014). In the case of this research, the independent variables being resourcing, governance, curriculum relevance, perceived employability, graduate responsibility and relevant work experience are used to determine the value of the dependent variable, graduate employability. ANOVA is a parametric statistical test that is used to examine how the

means of different groups/outcome variables differ from one another. One independent variable is used in a one-way ANOVA.

4.3 Validity and Reliability.

Quantitative studies that use surveys need to include strategies that establish the validity of the instrument used (Creswell, 2018). It is important that the questionnaire appears at face value to measure all the identified variables. Therefore, the numerous survey items have been drawn from a variety of literature studies, particularly Finch et al. (2013) and Bennett (2018). The degree to which a variable or combination of variables consistently measures the item designed to measure is known as reliability (Creswell, 2018). In other words, the values of the study variables will all be consistent when several measurements are conducted. Checking for instrument reliability is done to ensure that measurement results are credible and to adequately facilitate testing hypotheses and drawing conclusions about the relationships between variables in quantitative research (Cresswell,2018). This study has made deliberate efforts to deal with the various threats to data collection reliability by using the following strategies. First, providing participants with clear and consistent instructions. Second, by having measurement instruments express things clearly enough that they can be easily understood by participants. Third, measuring abstract notions with enough indications of the same kind and having similar survey administration conditions. Fourth, pretesting the questions through a pilot survey. Fifth providing all alternatives to all questions and presenting the question in the proper order starting with demographic data and moving on to the other sections. Finally, by making the questionnaire not too long or hard to read.

One of the most important manifestations of validity in quantitative research is internal validity. According to internal validity, changes in the dependent variable are caused by changes in the independent variable(s), not by other confounding variables (Ihantola & Kihn, 2011). Threats to internal validity during research design include a lack of understanding of the study variables or logical inconsistencies (Ihantola & Kihn, 2011). Studies with low internal validity, however, can also result from flaws in the latter stages of the research process, such as during data collecting, analysis, and/or interpretation. This research in this regard strives to clearly define the study variables at the onset stages and subsequently depict the relationship between them in the analytical framework. According to Ihantola and Kihn

(2011), internal validity may be threatened by a variety of factors during data collection, such as instrumentation problems, question order bias not to mention a researcher's prejudice in the use of methodologies. This research addresses some if not all these issues when dealing with data collection reliability (see previous paragraph).

An important consideration in quantitative research is external validity. It establishes if results can be extrapolated to other samples, environmental contexts, and time periods based on the model employed and the data gathered, and whether they can be utilized to draw more general conclusions (Ihantola & Kihn, 2011). This means that the population, time, and environmental validity of a quantitative study are three common issues that could jeopardize its external validity. If there are prejudices or other restrictions on the relevant population, external validity may be substantially compromised. The estimates may be pointless if the sample size is insufficient, or the sample is not random since the sample may not accurately represent the general population (Ihantola & Kihn, 2011). This research, therefore, is cognizant of the fact that the anticipated relatively low survey response rate and the fact that convenience sampling; a nonprobability sampling technique, could make it difficult to generalize the data analysis findings to the entire population with a high degree of accuracy.

Time validity measures how broadly the findings of a certain study at a given time can be applied to other time periods (Ihantola & Kihn, 2011). Owing to its cross-sectional nature, the time validity of a study of this type will be weak if there are structural shifts in the relationships between the variables. This research is cognizant of the fact that the study variables could well depict an entirely different picture if the cross-sectional sample used were to be from a different past year and not the year 2016. Environmental validity shows how well results can be applied in various contexts with one potential issue being transnational generalizability (Ihantola & Kihn, 2011). This study's findings could as well paint the same picture if replicated in another African country with similar socioeconomic conditions as Kenya. However, this remains very subjective and can only be confirmed by an actual similar study backed by sufficient data.

4.4 Ethical considerations

The survey strives to adhere to the prescribed ethical standards extensively discussed in Creswell (2018) when conducting research. Therefore, the emails containing links to the survey questions as well as on its cover page on Lime Survey, explains to participants what the survey seeks to investigate and or how that data collected shall be used. The survey then goes on to electronically obtain the consent of those who wish to proceed to take part in the survey, whilst also respecting the wishes of those who would not want to participate. Moreover, the survey is anonymous and therefore assures the participants of their own confidentiality and that of their responses. The results of the study are not anticipated to have any negative social or professional effects. Benefits to the academic community, policy makers, research funders, and other stakeholders could include a contribution to knowledge on the massification of higher education and graduate employability. The survey participants are informed that their contact details were obtained using public listings.

Data collected complies with Tampere University's data protection policies and the EU's General Data Protection Regulation. Some of these include not gathering personal information that is not required, limiting the amount of time personal information is retained, and safeguarding participants by making their data anonymous. A master's thesis does not require an institutional review board (IRB) approval, according to the Tampere Region's Ethical Review Committee.

Chapter 5: Analysis of data and interpretation of findings

5.1 Demographic information

Analysing respondents' demographics is the first step in data analysis. Table 1 below summarizes the sample data demographic characteristics. The data was collected from Bachelor of Commerce graduates from the University of Nairobi class of 2016 across seven majors: marketing, accounting, finance, operations management, procurement & supply chain management, human resource management and computer information systems. In total, there were 107 responses, representing a response rate of 30.3%. Out of filed responses, 46.7% were female and 53.3% were male. Furthermore, 43.9% of respondents were employed, compared to 22.4% who were not. Age-wise, 72% of the respondents were between 25 and 29 years old, 19.6% were between 30 and 34 years old, 7.5% were between 35 and 39 years old and one respondent was over 40. A sizeable number of the respondents had majored in Procurement & supply chain management (20.6%), accounting (18.7%) and finance (15.9) specializations.

Table 1
Demographic information

Characteristics	Responses	
	Number	%
Graduates' major		
Accounting	20	18.7
Finance	17	15.9
Marketing	13	12.1
Procurement & Supply chain Management	22	20.6
Operations Management	14	13.1
Human Resource Management	13	12.1
Computer Information Systems	8	7.5
Total	107	100
Gender		
Male	57	53.3
Female	50	46.7
Prefer not to disclose)	-	-
Total	107	100
Employment status		

Full-time employed	47	43.9
Part-time employed	20	18.7
Intern	5	4.7
About to start working	4	3.7
Unemployed and actively looking for a job	24	22.4
Other	7 (self-employment)	7
Total	107	100
If any parent has a first degree		
Yes	26	24.3
No	81	75.7
Total	107	100
Age (Years)		
Below 20	-	-
20-24	-	-
25-29	77	72
30-34	21	19.6
35-39	8	7.5
40 and above	1	0.9
Total	107	100

Source: Survey data (n=107)

An instrument reliability test is performed for the five key independent variables and the dependent variable in the study. The dependent variable is graduate employability while the independent variables are parents' educational level, curriculum relevance, resourcing, governance, graduate responsibility, perceived employability and relevant work experience. Table 2 below summarizes the results. All of the multidimensional variables employed in the study have adequate internal consistency reliability for a quantitative study in the field of the social sciences because their Cronbach's alpha coefficients are all above 0.6.

Table 2

Internal consistency measures for the different scales

Variables/factors	Cronbach's alpha	Number of items
Graduate employability	0.624	2
Curriculum relevance	0.933	8
Resourcing	0.866	6
Governance	0.934	13
Graduate responsibility	0.964	20
Perceived employability	0.891	7

Source: Survey data (n=107)

5.2 Relative importance of general employability skills

The analysis below focuses on research sub question 1 which gauges the graduates' opinions on the general employability skills and attributes that they perceive are most critical when employers are making recruitment decisions for graduate entry-level job positions. The question in the survey that is used to gather the relevant data was: Please rank the following skills and attributes in their order of importance in securing an initial graduate-level job. (i.e., 5=very important, 4=important,3=moderately important,2=not so important,1=not important at all). The study utilizes mean scores to identify the attributes and skills that graduates believe employers prioritize when hiring fresh business graduates. A few previous studies have also ranked the relative importance of skills using mean scores (Succi and Canovi 2019; Lim et al., 2016).The analysis focuses on the top four skills that employers look for when hiring recent business graduates for entry-level positions, as suggested by Succi and Canovi (2019). The first four crucial skills were also the focus of a graduate employability analysis by Lim et al. (2016) Before analysing the data based on each of the seven majors, a combined analysis of all respondents is first undertaken.

As depicted in table 3, according to the respondents the top four generic employability skills and attributes that employers value most when recruiting fresh university graduates are communication skills, technical skills, problem solving skills, teamwork skills and networking skills (Table 3). Teamwork skills and networking skills are tied at rank four. When hiring recent graduates for entry-level positions, employers place a moderate amount of importance on adaptability skills (ranked eighth), while interpersonal skills (ranked ninth), the ability to work with diversity (ranked tenth), resilience (ranked eleventh), and leadership skills (ranked twelfth) are given relatively little weight. There was no statistically significant difference in the means between the various employability abilities ($F = 0.438, p > 0.05$). This indicates that graduates gave the same employability skills same rankings for importance notably the top three. A comparison of the perceptions of graduates from the seven majors suggests that graduates similarly ranked communication skills, technical skills and problem-solving skills as the three most important skills. However, there is a noticeable slight difference between the seven majors in terms of the overall ranking of the other nine skills.

The 'mean' ratings of the importance accorded to each employability skill were compared across the seven majors using one-way ANOVA to see if there were any significant differences. The findings indicate that there were no significant disparities in the rankings of the various generic employability skills and attributes by the graduates from the seven majors except for the skill 'resilience & ability to work under pressure', whose p-value is <0.05. This suggests that, on average, graduates from the various majors held comparable views regarding the relative significance of the other eleven generic employability skills and attributes by employers when hiring recent graduates for entry-level positions

Table 3

Relative importance of general employability skills

Skill/attribute type	Totals			Marketing			Accounting			Procurement & Supply Chain Management			Finance			Operations Management			Human Resource Management			Computer Information Systems			One-way ANOVA			
	Mean**	SD	Rank	Mean	SD	Rank	Mean	SD	Rank	Mean	SD	Rank	Mean	SD	Rank	Mean	SD	Rank	Mean	SD	Rank	Mean	SD	Rank	F	Sig*		
Communication skills	4.61	0.844	1	4.55	0.759	3	4.76	0.562	1	4.46	0.967	3	4.45	1.101	3	4.64	1.082	3	4.92	0.277	1	4.50	0.756	3	0.611	0.721		
Positive attitudes & behaviors	4.47	0.872	6	4.45	0.887	5	4.53	0.717	5	4.23	1.166	6	4.36	1.002	5	4.57	0.852	4	4.77	0.599	2	4.38	0.744	4	0.536	0.780		
Problem-solving skills	4.55	0.743	3	4.40	0.681	6	4.71	0.588	2	4.69	0.630	1	4.55	0.800	1	4.64	0.842	3	4.46	0.877	5	4.38	0.916	4	0.499	0.807		
Interpersonal skills	4.43	0.837	9	4.45	0.759	5	4.65	0.493	3	4.38	0.768	4	4.14	1.082	7	4.50	1.092	5	4.62	0.650	4	4.38	0.744	4	0.706	0.645		
Time management skills	4.48	0.718	5	4.60	0.598	2	4.35	0.702	9	4.46	0.776	3	4.27	0.883	6	4.57	0.646	4	4.62	0.650	4	4.63	0.744	2	0.653	0.687		
Teamwork skills	4.50	0.769	4	4.40	0.754	6	4.59	0.618	4	4.46	0.967	3	4.55	0.596	1	4.71	0.611	2	4.31	1.182	6	4.38	0.744	4	0.473	0.827		
Ability to learn and adapt quickly	4.44	0.815	8	4.55	0.826	3	4.41	0.870	7	4.31	0.751	5	4.55	0.671	1	4.57	0.852	4	4.31	1.109	6	4.13	0.641	6	0.430	0.857		
Self-management skills	4.46	0.704	7	4.55	0.686	3	4.59	0.507	4	4.46	0.776	3	4.50	0.740	2	4.43	0.646	6	4.23	0.927	7	4.25	0.707	5	0.569	0.754		
Networking skills	4.50	0.782	4	4.50	0.761	4	4.65	0.606	3	4.62	0.65	2	4.27	0.883	6	4.64	1.082	3	4.69	0.480	3	4.13	0.835	6	1.106	0.365		
Technical skills	4.60	0.739	2	4.65	0.745	1	4.53	0.717	5	4.46	1.050	3	4.50	0.740	2	4.79	0.579	1	4.69	0.630	3	4.71	0.756	1	0.399	0.878		
Leadership skills	4.28	0.802	12	4.45	0.759	5	4.38	0.619	8	4.31	1.182	5	4.23	0.813		4.43	0.646	6	4.15	0.801	8	3.75	0.707	7	0.907	0.493		
Resilience and ability to work under pressure	4.33	0.833	11	4.65	0.671	1	4.18	0.636	10	4.15	0.987	7	4.50	0.740	2	4.36	0.842	7	4.46	0.776	5	3.38	1.061	8	3.094	0.008		
Working with diversity	4.34	0.812	10	4.60	0.598	2	4.18	0.883	10	4.38	0.768	4	4.41	0.666	4	4.21	1.051	8	4.46	0.877	5	3.75	0.886	7	1.661	0.139		
One-way ANOVA	F=0-438, $\eta^2=0.852$																											

Source: Survey data (n=107)

5.3 Extent to which graduates perceive personal management and teamwork skills, attributes and behaviors are developed as at the time of graduation.

This analysis relates to research sub question two. Graduates from all seven majors were asked to rate how well-developed they perceived various teamwork and personal management skills were at the time of graduation. The most that the university could do is to provide a favourable environment to support the acquisition of these skills and attributes by learners, taking a lead from prior research (Bennett, 2018) and assuming that developing these two sets of skills and attributes is largely the responsibility of the graduates when they are students. Which of the following skills and attributes do you perceive you have fully developed as of the time your degree program was over? (i.e., 5= Very developed, 4=Developed,3= Moderately developed 2=Slightly developed, 1= Not developed at all) was the question posed to the participants. When determining the degree to which a given ability was fully developed among business students at the time of graduation, a higher mean score tended towards "fully developed." As depicted in table 4 below, the five most developed personal management skills and attributes among recent business graduates were self-confidence, ability to plan and manage time, self-reliant, proactive, and creativity/innovative thinking. Honesty/integrity & personal ethics perseverance (eighth ranked), conscientious (ninth ranked) and recognition & respect for diversity and individual differences (tenth ranked) according to the respondents, were the least developed personal management skills.

Table 4*Personal management skills*

	Mean**	SD	Rank	Mean	SD	Rank	Mean	SD	Rank	Mean	SD	Rank	Mean	SD	Rank	Mean	SD	Rank	Mean	SD	Rank	Mean	SD	Rank	F	Sig*
Honesty, integrity & personal ethics perseverance	3.98	0.776	8	4.20	0.696	6	3.87	0.834	7	3.92	0.793	5	4.00	0.756	1	3.71	1.069	8	4.15	0.376	5	3.88	0,835	4	0.733	0.624
Recognition & respect for diversity and individual differences	3.89	0.749	10	4.00	0.562	8	3.93	0.704	6	3.92	0.900	5	3.77	0.752	6	3.71	1.069	8	4.08	0.641	6	3.88	0.641	4	0.421	0.863
Accountability	4.03	0.818	6	4.25	0.639	5	3.93	0.704	6	4.00	0.953	4	3.91	0.868	3	4.07	1.072	5	4.08	0.760	6	3.88	0.835	4	0.405	0.874
Self-awareness	4.00	0.870	7	4.45	0.605	2	3.80	0.775	8	4.00	0.853	4	3.77	1.110	6	3.93	1.072	7	4.23	0.439	4	3.62	0.744	5	1.764	0.114
Conscientious (task focused, self-motivated)	3.91	0.956	9	4.15	0.745	7	3.53	0.915	9	3.75	1.215	6	3.82	1.053	5	4.00	1,177	6	4.08	0.641	6	4.13	0.835	2	0.833	0.547
Positive attitude	4.13	0.848	2	4.40	0.598	3	4.13	0.834	2	4.08	1.084	3	3.86	0.990	4	4.07	0917	5	4.38	0.650	2	4.00	0.756	3	0.939	0.471
Proactive (i.e., takes initiative)	4.10	0.830	4	4.35	0.671	4	4.20	0.676	1	3.92	0.996	5	3.91	0.921	3	4.14	0.949	4	4.08	0.862	6	4.00	0.756	3	0.643	0.696
Self-confidence	4.15	0.879	1	4.50	0.607	1	4.00	0.845	5	4.17	0.937	2	3.95	1.046	2	4,21	0.802	3	4.08	1.115	6	4.13	0.641	2	0.803	0.570
Creativity and innovative thinking skills	4.06	0.912	5	4.35	0.671	4	3.93	0.799	6	4.25	0.754	1	3.64	1.177	8	4.21	0.802	3	4.00	1.080	7	4.25	0.707	1	1.433	0.210
Ability to plan and manage time.	4.13	0.860	2	4.40	0.598	3	4.07	0.961	3	4.00	0.953	4	3.68	0.894	7	4.43	0.756	1	4.46	0.877	1	4.00	0.756	3	2.154	0.054
Self-reliant	4.12	0.816	3	4.20	0.951	6	4.00	0.756	4	4.08	0.793	3	3.95	0.653	2	4.36	0.842	2	4.31	0.855	3	3.88	0.991	4	0.659	0.683
One-way ANOVA	F=1.008, p=0.424																									

Source: Survey data (n=107)

On the 5-point Likert scale, the mean scores were still falling within the "developed" range. Very few of the mean scores for any of the seven majors' personal management skills fell within the range of 4.5 to 5.0, which corresponded to 'very developed' on the Likert scale. In other words, none of the graduates across the seven majors strongly perceived that they had fully developed all of the necessary personal management skills and attributes as of the time of graduation. This implies that graduates from all seven majors thought there was still room for enhancement in the level of personal management skills they possessed at graduation. The mean differences among the 10 personal management skills was not statistically significant ($F = 1.008, p > 0.05$). This indicates that overall, graduates had similar perceptions regarding the extent to which the ten skills and attributes had developed by the time they graduated. To determine whether there are any considerable differences in the graduates' perceptions, one-way ANOVA is used to compare the mean scores of the graduates from the various majors. There were no significant differences in the mean scores of the ten personal management skills provided by graduates from the seven majors as the overall p-value was greater than 0.05. This suggests that even across the seven majors, graduates had similar perceptions on the extent to which the 10 skills were developed at graduation.

Table 5
Teamwork skills

Skill/attribute type	Totals			Marketing			Accounting			Procurement & supply chain management			Finance			Operations management			Human resource management			Computer information systems			One-way ANOVA			
	Mean**	SD	Rank	Mean	SD	Rank	Mean	SD	Rank	Mean	SD	Rank	Mean	SD	Rank	Mean	SD	Rank	Mean	SD	Rank	Mean	SD	Rank	F	Sig*		
Respect the thoughts and opinions of group members.	3.95	0.805	8	3.95	0.686	8	3.94	0.68	5	3.83	1.030	5	3.77	0.813	3	4.21	1.051	1	4.17	0.718	5	3.88	0.641	2	0.614	0.719		
Contribute to group problem-solving.	4.03	0.769	5	4.00	0.649	7	4.06	0.772	3	4.00	0.739	4	3.86	0.774	1	4.14	0.864	2	4.42	0.900	2	3.75	0.707	3	0.912	0.489		
Ability to take responsibility of assigned tasks by group.	4.02	0.836	6	4.05	0.826	6	4.19	0.655	2	4.00	1.044	4	3.77	0.869	3	4.21	0.699	1	4.25	0.965	4	3.63	0.744	4	1.009	0.424		
Plan & make decisions with others and support the outcomes	4.01	0.865	7	4.30	0.733	2	4.00	0.730	4	3.83	0.937	5	3.64	0.902	5	4.00	0.877	4	4.42	0.900	2	4.00	0.926	1	1.646	0.143		
Leadership ability	4.10	0.854	1	4.45	0.605	1	4.31	0.704	1	4.17	0.937	2	3.64	1.049	5	4.00	0.877	4	4.25	0.622	4	3.88	0.835	2	2.139	0.056		
Exercise 'give & take' to achieve group results.	4.08	0.797	2	4.25	0.639	3	4.31	0.602	1	4.08	0.793	3	3.68	0.995	4	4.00	0.877	4	4.50	0.522	1	3.75	0.707	3	2.256	0.044		
Mobilize group for high performance.	3.93	0.873	9	4.10	0.718	5	3.88	0.885	6	4.00	0.953	4	3.59	1.008	6	4.07	0.829	3	4.25	0.866	4	3.75	0.707	3	1.095	0.371		
Ability to resolve & manage conflicts.	4.04	0.847	4	4.30	0.733	2	4.06	0.772	3	4.00	0.603	4	3.77	1.066	3	4.21	0.802	1	4.17	0.835	5	3.63	0.916	4	1.161	0.334		
Ability to seek team approach where appropriate	4.07	0.816	3	4.20	0.696	4	3.81	0.834	7	4.25	0.622	1	3.82	1.053	2	4.21	0.802	1	4.33	0.778	3	4.00	0.535	1	1.094	0.371		
One-way ANOVA	F=1.503, p=0.185																											

Source: Survey data (n=107)

Table 5 depicts the extent to which teamwork skills were perceived to be fully developed in graduates as at the time of graduation. The graduates ranked leadership ability, exercising give and take to achieve group results, ability to seek team approach where appropriate and ability to resolve/manage conflicts as the four most developed in new business graduates. Graduates across the seven majors of students agreed that the various teamwork skills were 'developed' as of the time of graduation. According to the graduates, the least developed teamwork skills at the time of graduation were planning/making decisions with others and supporting the outcomes, respect for the thoughts/opinions of group members, and ability to mobilize groups for high performance. Likewise, it is obvious that none of the mean scores fell in the 4.5–5 mean score range, which denoted 'very developed'. This shows that graduates felt there was still room for improvement in terms of their teamwork skills at the time of graduation. The overall ANOVA shows that there were no statistically significant differences in the rankings of the various teamwork skills ($F = 1.503, p > 0.05$). This indicates that graduates' perceptions were generally rather similar, the only exception being teamwork skill/attribute 'exercise 'give & take' to achieve group results' whose p value was less than 0.05 and therefore whose ranking was statistically significantly different across all the graduates

5.4 University's effectiveness in implementing various learning approaches crucial in enabling learners acquire employability skills.

The analysis here relates to the extent of the university's effectiveness in implementing different pedagogical approaches crucial in helping learners onboard crucial employability skills . Graduates were asked: To what extent was your university effective in implementing the following teaching and learning methods considered crucial in facilitating /enabling students acquire 'employability skills'? (Please rank in order of effectiveness i.e. 5= Very effective, 4=effective, 3=moderately effective, 2= Not so effective, 1= Not effective at all). The "most effective" approach is associated with a greater mean score. Table 6 summarizes the findings. The results as presented in table 6, show that graduates perceive that the university was 'Moderately effective' in a mix of lecture-centric teaching techniques (such as lectures, tests & quizzes and written assignments) and 'Not so effective' in implementing student-centric techniques that promote experiential learning and active student participation in their

own education (such as internship placements, group case studies, industry/company guest speakers giving presentations to students at the university, etc.).

Table 6

Overall mean scores of various learning methods

Learning technique	Mean	SD
Lectures	3.23	0.947
Assignments	3.09	2.64
Internship/ industry job placements	2.64	1.044
Group case studies/debates	2.82	1.106
Inviting Industry guest speakers	2.50	1.093
Reading material when preparing for final examinations	2.98	1.107
Tests/quizzes	3.07	1.179
University career services	2.38	1.218

One-way ANOVA. F=0.488 ρ =0.488

Source: Survey data (n=107)

The effectiveness of university's career services in aiding learners to develop employability skills was viewed as being rather low. Overall, there were no statistically significant differences in the scores of the various pedagogical approaches across the seven different majors ($F = 0.488, p > 0.05$). This indicates that graduates' perceptions of the university's effectiveness in putting different instructional techniques into practise were more or less consistent. Tests, quizzes, and final exams both of which are considered to be traditional methods of measuring learning were perceived as being rather moderately effective for fostering employability skills, likely in part because they lack an interactive component and are not grounded in actual workplace settings.

5.5 Factors affecting graduates' perceived employability.

The analysis here relates to the effect of different factors on perceived employability. An examination of these factors is shown in Table 7. The results suggest that graduates seem to a greater extent regard their academic work as high quality and agree that they had achieved high grades in their studies. However, the graduates seem to be low in confidence regarding

their possessed skills in relation to the skills requirements of the labour market. Graduates seems not to completely agree in the ability of their degree to lead to a specific career and to secure a graduate-level job upon graduation. However, the likelihood of landing a graduate-level employment was hindered by the status of the labour market. On a 5-point Likert scale, the remaining three variables namely, the labour demand for graduates at the present time, the availability of employment prospects in the graduates' chosen field, and the relative availability of job openings in the graduates' vicinity had scores that fell between "disagree" and "neutral." This may be partially attributable to how COVID-19 has affected local, national, and international economies and, in turn, labour markets. The bigger takeaway from this finding is that the status of the local labour market has an impact on graduate employability in addition to having in-demand technical and employability skills. Overall, there were no statistically significant differences in the scores of the various factors that affect perceived employability across the seven different majors ($F = 1.367, p > 0.05$). This indicates that graduates' perceptions of the these factors were more or less consistent

Table 7
Factors influencing graduates' perceived employability.

Factor	Mean	SD
I can easily find job opportunities in my chosen field	2.64	0.965
My degree is seen as leading to a specific career that is generally perceived to be desirable	2.90	0.945
I regard my academic work as high quality	3.45	0.914
I have achieved high grades in my studies	3.70	0.767
People in the career I am aiming are in high demand in the labour market	2.78	1.012
There is generally a strong demand for graduates at the present time	2.46	0.928
There are plenty of job vacancies in the geographical area where I am looking	2.31	0.851

One-way ANOVA. $F=1.367$ $\rho=0.235$

Source: Survey data (n=107)

5.6 Impact of predictor variables on graduate employability

This analysis relates to the main research question: Which factors significantly affect graduate employability in Kenya's labour market? This study primarily sought to investigate the effect of higher education governance, graduate responsibility, perceived employability, resourcing, curriculum relevance and relevant work experience on graduate employability.

The following null predictions were proposed based of the central hypothesis which is that massification of higher education in recent decades has had a negative impact on graduate employability.

H₀₁: There is no significant negative relationship between graduate employability and the level of inadequate resourcing [inadequate staffing & physical infrastructure].

H₀₂: There is no significant negative relationship between graduate employability and poor governance [weak organizational structures and low stakeholder participation].

H₀₃: There is no significant negative relationship between graduate employability and pedagogical factors [social hierarchies and outdated approaches to learning, curriculum design/teaching and assessment].

H₀₄: There is no significant positive relationship between graduate employability and graduate responsibility.

H₀₅ : There is no significant positive relationship between graduate employability and graduates' perceived employability.

H₀₆ : There is no significant positive relationship between graduate employability and graduates' relevant work experience.

The following alternative predictions; also borne out of the central hypothesis, have been created:

H_{A1}: There is a significant negative relationship between graduate employability and the level of resourcing [inadequate staffing & physical infrastructure].

H_{A2}: There is a significant negative relationship between graduate employability and governance [weak organizational structures and low stakeholder participation].

H_{A3}: There is a negative significant relationship between graduate employability and pedagogical factors [social hierarchies and outdated approaches to learning, curriculum design/teaching and assessment].

H_{A4}: There is a significant positive relationship between graduate employability and graduate responsibility.

H_{A5} : There is a significant positive relationship between graduate employability and graduates' perceived employability.

H_{A6} : There is a significant positive relationship between graduate employability and graduates' relevant work experience

The dependent variable (graduate employability) was regressed on the predicting variables of governance, relevant work experience, graduate responsibility, perceived employability, resourcing, curriculum relevance. The findings show that only two independent variables resourcing and curriculum relevance (6,94) =2.377, $p < 0.05$ which suggests that these have significant bearing on graduate employability thus prompting the null hypotheses H_{01} and H_{03} to be rejected and the corresponding alternative hypotheses H_{A1} and H_{A3} to be accepted. Moreover, the $R = .076$ (as seen in table 7) depicts that the model explains 7.6 percent of the variance in graduate employability.

Table 8
Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.363 ^a	.132	.076	.770

Source: Survey data (n=107)

a. Dependent Variable: Graduate Employability

b. Predictors: (Constant), Governance, Relevant Work Experience, Graduate Responsibility, Perceived Employability, Resourcing, Curriculum Relevance

Table 9
Analysis of variance output

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	8.451	6	1.408	2.377	.035 ^b

Residual	55.688	94	.592		
Total	64.139	100			

Source: Survey data (n=107)

a. Dependent Variable: Graduate Employability

b. Predictors: (Constant), Governance, Relevant Work Experience, Graduate Responsibility, Perceived Employability, Resourcing, Curriculum Relevance

Table 10

Multiple linear regression output

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.914	.570		3.355	.001
	Resourcing	-.065	.022	.413	3.018	.003
	Curriculum Relevance	-.047	.019	-.410	-2.508	.014
	Graduate Responsibility	.009	.007	.146	1.323	.189
	Perceived Employability	.017	.097	.021	.173	.863
	Relevant Work Experience	.111	.098	.116	1.138	.258
	Governance	-.002	.015	.021	.115	.909

Source: Survey data (n=107)

Additionally, other coefficients (as seen in table 10) were further assessed to ascertain the influence of each of the other four independent variables on graduate employability. H_{A2} evaluates whether weak institutional governance significantly and negatively affects graduate employability. The results revealed that weak institutional governance has a negative but not statistically significant impact on graduate employability ($B=-0.002$, $t = 0.115$, $p>0.05$) Hence, H_{A2} was not supported. H_{A4} evaluates whether graduate responsibility has a significantly positive impact on graduate employability. The results show that graduate responsibility has a positive but no statistically significant impact on graduate employability ($B=0.009$, $t=1.323$, $p>0.05$). Consequently, H_{A4} was not supported. H_{A5} evaluates whether perceived employability has a significantly positive impact on graduate employability. The results show that perceived employability has a positive but not statistically significant impact on graduate employability ($B=0.017$, $t=0.173$, $p>0.05$). Hence, H_{A5} was not supported. The results revealed that relevant work experience has a positive but not statistically significant impact on

graduate employability ($B=0.111$, $t = 1.138$, $p>0.05$) Hence, H_{A6} was not supported. The results are presented in table 10 above.

Chapter 6: Discussion, conclusions, limitations & suggestions for future research

6.1 Discussion

The following theoretical and empirical implications for practice are presented considering the analysis of key research findings:

Firstly, although business graduates were satisfied with their degree of personal management and teamwork skills and attributes when they graduated, there still seems to be room for development. However, the development of such skills is difficult and needs much more than just exposing business graduates to formulaic approaches or creative and innovative learning techniques (Mainga et al.,2022). These skills will be increasingly valuable and essential for maintaining graduates' employability in the workplace of the future. Reason being that the demand for these skills is less vulnerable to being replaced by present and future automation and artificial intelligence (AI).

Secondly, learners who are time-starved and typically have greater need for such services (i.e., those from low socioeconomic backgrounds) are far less likely to engage with university career services when they are offered on a voluntary basis (McCownan,2016_b). Therefore, higher education institutions in Kenya may need to borrow a leaf from worldwide trends where the profile of career services has been augmented within universities, in conjunction with greater institutional attention on graduate employability, depending on the circumstances of each specific university. In developed countries, colleges, faculties, institutions, or departments are progressively integrating career services into their teaching and learning operations (Cavanagh et al.,2015). They collaborate with academics to integrate and co-deliver professional development training into modules that are partially required.

Thirdly, for graduates to acquire a broad variety of in-demand employability skills, a combination of traditional teaching methods (such as lectures, class discussions, reading and working alone, etc.), learner-centered approaches, and novel pedagogies is required. Studies conducted in Australia, Europe, Canada, and the United States, however, indicate that substantial investments in staff training is required to attain maximum success in a variety of

new pedagogies and to create the optimal portfolio of instructional techniques that are better suited to various disciplines (Bennett et al.,2020).

Fourthly, the study reveals how labour market demand and geographical location, both external elements, influence graduates' perceived employability. Higher education institutions are simply one of many, albeit very significant, factors to long-term graduate employability. Employers, the government, alumni, industry associations, parents, etc. all need to contribute to a more comprehensive strategy for increasing graduate employability, as will other non-skill-based issues.

Fifthly, resourcing and curriculum relevance (both found to significantly impact graduate employability) as well as governance in Kenya's higher education institutions all reinforce one another; as one is improved, the others will follow suit. Therefore, the country's higher education sector needs a three-tiered strategy to handle these issues concurrently. It is typical to hear suggestions for remedies that just address one aspect of the issue, such as professional development or the hiring of new lecturers. This only function if related adjustments are made in the other areas. Resource limitations must be taken into consideration because, in the end, the system can only fully improve with further investment. The Kenyan state and society must address the financial burden of funding higher education head-on, in addition to and not as a compromise against funding for basic and secondary education.

Sixthly, the marketization of the system clearly calls for a great deal of prudence in terms of governance. Since the 1990s, strategies of privatization have been implemented due to awareness of resource limitations, which has resulted in the growth of the dual track in the country's public higher education institutions as well as the establishment of several private providers. These responses, though they have maintained the system's continued growth, have done so at the expense of quality. As previously pointed out, the disconnect between degree diplomas and quality educational opportunities means that market mechanisms alone cannot guarantee system-wide high standards of quality. Fee-paying students will nonetheless enroll in low-quality courses if they believe they will graduate with a qualification that is advantageous in the labour market. However, maintaining a high-quality learning

environment is necessary to provide positive outcomes for society, which results in graduates being more productive in the job and making other positive spill over contributions to society. Therefore, government intervention is required to ensure quality throughout the system. This requires a combination of regulation, which includes mechanisms typically associated with quality assurance such as addressing issues like the lack of adequate financial incentives for individual lecturers to concentrate on providing high-quality teaching, and informational outreach to prospective students. Regulation includes the use of public resources to fund areas where there is market failure and ensure equity.

Finally, to improve pedagogical culture, grassroots initiatives are required. Studies like that of Robinson and Garton (2008), demonstrate the important role that an enabling departmental culture can have in converting the language of learner-centric education into pedagogical practices that can improve student learning. This process includes the growth of academic staff, and there are several exciting new initiatives in this field. To ensure that lecturers have incentives in place and time set aside for these activities, the creation of credit-bearing credentials in teaching and learning in higher education offers a viable answer. Changes to the promotion standards, peer observation programs and mentoring are all crucial initiatives. It is impossible to totally separate these discussions from dynamics at the basic and secondary levels, as is the case with many discussions in higher education. As a result, past learning experiences have a great influence on habits and expectations among students and lecturers regarding approaches to learning, evaluation, and interpersonal interactions. As with issues of access fairness, dealing with these concerns at the higher education level necessitates simultaneous initiatives at lower levels of the system. In addition, as previously alluded to in the literature review, some of the difficulties in pedagogy are entrenched in deeper cultural issues of social hierarchies and linkages to knowledge, and as a result, change may take a long time to manifest.

6.2 Conclusion

This study emphasizes the value of gathering feedback from learners on their employability after graduation. Even with its shortcomings, this graduate perspective can be one of many inputs used by higher education institutions to create institutional policies on graduate employability. However, it worth noting that not all necessary soft skills can be developed in

a university setting or in a classroom. It is only long after the learner has graduated from university, some of the soft skills necessary to navigate today's dynamic labour markets will be acquired and improved. It is important to inspire all learners even those who may dislike or be over school to cultivate a love and desire for further skilling, reskilling, and upskilling all through their careers. Long-term employability involves much more than just acquiring in-demand skills; it also involves having the flexibility to adapt and the initiative to stay relevant in these dynamic and changing labour markets.

For graduates to develop the broad range of soft skills that are needed to succeed in the workplace, a combination of traditional teaching approaches, learner-centered strategies, and integrative novel pedagogies is needed. It is up to each faculty, college, school, or department to choose the most appropriate portfolio of teaching strategies required to create a discipline-specific blend of soft skills. According to past research (Bailly,2008), learning strategies that encourage experimentation, real-world problem-solving, teamwork, project-based learning, reflexivity, and constructivist and dialogic approaches are more likely to be successful in helping learners develop soft skills that are applicable to the workplace. Additionally, efforts should be taken to guarantee that the learning experiences operate at the nexus of theory and practice. Such goals cannot be realized in the short term. It necessitates experimentation, gradual innovation, organizational learning, and setting off on a journey of continuous development (Brewis & McCowan,2016). It takes a variety of techniques and contributions from different stakeholders (such as students, employers, governments, employer groups, alumni, parents, etc.) to develop graduate employability. At the institutional level, career services' assistance in collaboration with schools, faculties, and departments will increasingly be crucial in assisting Kenya's higher education institutions in concentrating their efforts on improving graduate employability. The need to address additional, out-of-control causes and contributions to improving graduate employment must be addressed. This study demonstrates that, the perceived employability of graduates is influenced by how strong the labour market demand is at the time.

Conceptually, it is necessary to integrate the views of learners as one of the stakeholders in the joint development of HEIs' graduate employability policies (Clarke,2017). In higher education, learners nowadays especially in developed countries play an active part in their

own learning and knowledge building rather than just being passive knowledge consumers (Clarke,2017). Even if not all the perceptions of learners will match the realities of the job or what employers anticipate, this knowledge is nonetheless significant and pertinent.

It is crucial to stress that significant technological breakthroughs in areas such as artificial intelligence (AI), cutting-edge robotics, 5G technologies, the internet of Things (IoT), big data analytics, cloud-based and mobile data computing, machine learning, and distributed ledger/blockchain technology will have a disruptive impact on how work is restructured and the future demand for skills, including in developing countries. The changes to skill requirements and employment arrangements occasioned by the increased adoption of such technologies will have a significant influence on graduates' employability. Therefore, Kenya's higher education institutions must focus on churning out graduates who are prepared for the future as well as providing educational programs that guarantee graduates who are not only ready but also right for the labour market. Like other developing countries, Kenya has an ambitious plan for its own growth; contained in the country's vision 2030 development blueprint, with needs for a populace that is highly innovative, technologically savvy, and globally connected to advance an egalitarian and successful society. There needs to be a constructive alignment (Guàrdia et al.,2001) of higher education teaching with the desired vision of the country if these critical, creative graduates are to be developed. Coordinated action will be needed to overcome the interconnected constraints that are now impeding the establishment of a rich and supportive learning environment for students as part of this transition to this new higher education dispensation.

6.3 Limitations and suggestions for future research

Future studies could utilize larger sample responses by incentivizing participants to encourage more responses. This study could be repeated in other Kenyan higher education institution's colleges, faculties, and departments as well as elsewhere. Future research may examine additional elements that influence graduate employability but were not specifically addressed in this study, such as labour market issues, cultural, social, and psychological capitals, extracurricular activities, the influence of discipline-specific knowledge, institutional positioning, employer recruiting practices, the role of personal factors, the effects of the states of local and global economies at the time, etc. Examining the views of graduates is

crucial, but studies have shown that graduates frequently overestimate their skills (Bailly,2008; Cai,2012). A follow-up survey on employers' perceptions of graduate employability therefore could be warranted. When the opinions of employers and graduates are combined, a more accurate picture may emerge. Therefore, follow-up surveys on employers' perceptions of graduate employability in the Kenyan labour market context might need to be conducted in future studies.

This study acknowledges that it may be challenging to accurately generalize the results of the data analysis to the entire population due to the survey's relatively low response rate, which was around 30 percent not to mention the use of convenience sampling which is a nonprobability sampling technique. A cross-sectional study of this kind may exhibit weak time validity if the relationships between the variables undergo structural changes. This study is aware of the possibility that if the cross-sectional sample employed were from a different year in the past rather than 2016, the study variables may very well show a completely different picture.

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