

The Coming of Age of Open and Distance Learning in Higher Education in Kenya and its Potential Impact on Equity

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Abstract

One thing that was inherited from colonial education system is the place of equity in access to education opportunities at all levels and since independent the cure of this phenomenon has remained elusive. It is in this context that this paper focuses on the evolution, nature and promises of open and distance learning on promotion and enhancement of equity in higher education. In this scenario, I seek to address through critical analysis of relevant literature five things. First, I wish to give a conceptually brief but rich overview of distance learning and its encapsulation in education policy framework. Second, examine the impact and lessons from 22 years of existence of African Virtual University (AVU) in Kenya. Third, review the fundamental web of challenges and failures of adoption and adaption of open and distance learning in dual mode universities. Fourth, situate the development of open and distance learning institutions within the context of socio-political expediency. Finally, I wish to argue that our learning ecosystem has been embryologically nested in the evolution and nature of open and distance learning and that the recent initiative by the Government of Kenya to establish the Open University of Kenya is central in addressing and contributing to the recent call by UNESCO on “*reimagining our futures together: a new social contract for education*”, and transforming educational ecosystem towards equity and inclusivity. The entire paper treats and discusses e-learning as a sub-set of distance learning.

Keywords: Access, Equity, Distance learning, Dual mode institutions, Learning ecosystem

Introduction

Though in the last fifty years, distance learning has globally gained popularity, its development, acceptability and visibility as the mode of learning vary from country to country. This popularity has arisen out of distance learning cost effectiveness, scalability of numbers, creation of learning opportunities to those who would not previously have considered this to be accessible or affordable route to higher education. In Kenya, distance learning can be seen from an evolutionary perspective. According to Ridley (2015), all institutions, practices, systems and services such as education and education technology, teaching and learning have all evolved overtime and the evolution process continues. In this perspective, distance learning needs to be seen in the context of general educational changes and learning ecosystem in the country. As a system of learning, distance learning is conceptually treated in this paper as a method of delivery of instructions and as a philosophy of learning. The evolution of formal education in Kenya can be seen from two perspectives, namely: the historical period and the sponsors’ objectives. The question is: how was

education delivered prior to independence and after independent and when did the demand for distance learning emerge? Invariably, the development and support for open and distance learning is one way of scaffolding the recent UNESCO (2021) call for nations to situate their provision of education on three broad issues, namely: addressing historical injustice; current and future challenges.

Method

The information reviewed in this paper was gathered from various online and offline sources that included published journal articles in Google Scholar, books, government documents and reports, internet search for such key words as distance learning, education equity and inclusion, colonial education, micro-credentials.

Global Historical Perspective

Distance learning is a discipline that has developed over many centuries. It has emerged in the following forms and variants:

- Correspondence courses: - e.g., those conducted by Pitman for shorthand (Heydenrych & Prinsloo, 2010; UNESCO, 2000).
- Tuition for external examinations: -e.g., those offered by University of London and British Tutorial College (UNESCO, 2000).
- Off-campus, part-time or blended studies: -e.g., school-based, Executive MBA program offered by many local dual mode universities.
- 100% students off-campus: -e.g., Open University of United Kingdom; UNISA; Open University of Tanzania; Open University of Kenya.

In-Country Distance Learning Development Trends

Historically, the growth and the development of distance learning in Kenya is nested in several educational facets and variant sub-sets. Like an implanted embryo, it survived attempted abortions during its gestation period from colonial to post-colonial era. In this context, e-learning as a specialized delivery method is not a separate development from distance learning. Being a sub-set of distance learning, it is embedded in the development of distance learning. Introspectively, the genesis and the history of formal education in Kenya is short and the two broad periods in its growth and development are: colonial and post-colonial era.

Colonial Era

During the colonial period, the major sponsors of education were religious groups and the colonizer. The educational objectives of the two groups of sponsors were different though complementary. Up to the onset of the apex for struggle for freedom in early 1950s, the religious education was intended to support the colonizer to rule the colonized with ease and improve colonial economy. The colonial education on the other hand was limited to the development of functional literacy, manual and practical skills in carpentry, agriculture, masonry and other allied crafts and subordination. Requests for the establishment of higher education were severally rejected. The major beneficiaries of both religious and colonial supported education were males.

(Kithinji, 2023; Republic of Kenya, 2023; Mackatian, Imbovah, Imbova, & Gakungai, 2016; Mwiria, 1991). During the entire colonial era the demand for distance learning was limited.

Post-Colonial Era

Specific developmental catalysts and milestones that contributed to the maturity and the coming of age of distance learning include: cross-border education; flexible entry, exit and re-entry system; early use of radio; adult and continuing education concept; print-based; education reform commissions and policy position; CCTV concept of 1990s; emergence of e-learning: the case of African Virtual University; dual mode development; enabling legal framework: Universities Act of 2012; and COVID 19 pandemic contribution.

Cross-Border Education

During colonial era, few Kenyans studied for secondary and university qualifications through correspondence offered by such institutions as Rapid Results College; Wolsey Hall Oxford; University College London; University of South Africa; University of Fort Hare. In post-colonial era Rapid Results College; University of South Africa; University College London; and British Tutorial College continued to offer cross border education.

Flexible Entry, Exit and Re-entry

The earlier system of education had in-built flexibility. At the high school level, the education system opened windows of opportunity and progression:

- KJSE: Provided teachers with the opportunity to accumulate passes for promotion from P3 to P2.
- KCE: Standard eight graduates, P3 and P2 teachers continued to study privately or through correspondence institutions for KCE qualifications and promotion to P1 teaching grade.
- KACE: KCE graduates and P1 teachers continued to study privately or through correspondence institutions for KACE qualifications for entry to university or promotion for those who were teachers to S1 or SA teaching grade or approved graduate grade.

The flexibility that was inbuilt in the education system underlined the concept of ‘openness’. However, following subsequent reforms in education these windows of opportunity for accessing education through distance learning at the secondary level have been gradually closing down. The 8-4-4 narrowed progression through off school avenues. In view of its formative assessment approach, CBC has completely sealed off school progression ladder outside school context. The question now is: how will those who fail to continue at different stages of basic education continue?

Early Use of Radio

The earliest educational technology to be used in Kenya to deliver instructions is the radio. In late 1960s and early 1970s the Ministry of Education through the former Kenya Institute of Education delivered primary and junior secondary school lessons through radio. In 1980s, Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health carried out in-service teacher training and in-service training

of health workers through the use of radio (Jenkins, 1990a, 1990b; Hawkrige, Kinyanjui, Nkinyangi, & Orivel, 1982).

Adult and Continuing Education concept

In many instances the evolution of adult and continuing education (ACE) in this country has not been seen as part of the evolution of distance learning. ACE is indeed a variant of the current understanding of distance education. The idea of ACE emerged from the fact that at independence there was a large proportion of citizens who were either denied education or restricted in progressing to the next level by the colonial regime. In addition, one of the agenda of the uhuru government was the elimination of ignorance and hence one vehicle for doing this was through ACE (Republic of Kenya, 1964).

The nexus between ACE and distance education is the philosophy that underpins both, namely: provision of education at a convenient time or in a flexible mode to persons who have other national, cultural, or family responsibilities to attend to; giving those interested a second chance to actualize their educational dreams; and using different teaching and learning methodologies from those of younger learners. It is in this context that ACE has been discussed by all education reform commissions, committees, and taskforces.

Print-Based

In 1962, the Institute of Adult Studies based then at Kikuyu was established to be in charge of distance education. Before introduction of e-learning, the unit, renamed ODeL Campus in 2016, utilized print-based materials developed through the support of UNESCO. In 1990s, the print study materials for B.Ed. program were loaned to the Open University of Tanzania to start off its B. Ed. program. Similarly, between 1997 and 2004, Egerton University utilized print study materials for its Military Science Certificate and Diploma program. To this day, Egerton University continues to use print materials to deliver its Master's degree program in South Sudan.

Education Reform Commissions and Policy Position

The various education reforms commissions and committees that have been set up by the government made recommendations touching on the support for distance learning or the elements of distance learning as follows:

- *Kenya Education Commission (1964)*: Recommended strengthening adult and continuing education and inclusion of prior learning in admission to engineering program at the University of Nairobi (p.96)
- *Report of the Presidential Working Party: Second University in Kenya (1981)*: Recommended that a College of Continuing Education be established as part of the university educational system. The College should be attached to the Second University so as to provide university education to those who otherwise might not have had such an opportunity (p. 54-55).

- *Sessional Paper No. 6 of 1988 On Education and Manpower Training for the Next Decade and Beyond*. Noted that the government accepts the recommendation of the Working Party that distance education be expanded and increasingly adopted as a more cost-effective method of offering education (p.35).
- *Sessional Paper No.1 of 2005 on A Policy Framework for Education, Training and Research*: Noted the need for the promotion of open universities, and distance education to increase learning opportunities (p. 56). One of the objectives of the MoE stated in the Paper is “to promote and popularise open and distance education at all levels of education and training by 2010”. It identified open and distance learning as an option in “expanding access to basic and subsequently, higher education”.
- *Transformation of Higher Education and Training in Kenya to Secure Kenya’s Development in the knowledge economy: Report of the Public Universities Inspection Board (2006)*. Observed and recommended:
 - a) Distance education programmes in higher education are generally disjointed and run on *ad hoc basis*.
 - b) The government should...establish Open University of Kenya by 2008 drawing on the experiences and expertise available in the local universities, the Africa Virtual University, African countries and the Commonwealth of Learning (p.47).
 - c) Access to tertiary institutions should be opened to those who have acquired knowledge, skills and competencies in non-formal settings in addition to the current practices of admitting students who have gone through the formal school system and attained the required academic admission criteria (p.38).
- Rumble (2008). *Establishing a distance-teaching national university in Kenya. Report to the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology*. The report advised the Ministry on how to design and plan for the establishment of the Open University of Kenya.
- *Reforming Education and Training Sectors in Kenya: Sessional Paper No. 14 of 2012*
 - a) Expansion of open and distance education in existing universities.
 - b) Establishing the Open University of Kenya by 2014.
- *National Education Sector Strategic Plan 2018-2022*: Notes that the objective of the Ministry of Education on access to university education: “is to strengthen and expand e-learning programmes in all universities. --- with a target of having 30% of the degree programmes available on e-learning mode” by the end of the planned period (p. 69).
- *Presidential Working Party on Education Reform (2023)*. Recommended:
 - a) MoE to operationalize the Open University in Kenya by 2023/2024 financial year.
 - b) CUE to review the University’s Standards and Guidelines, 2014, to provide criteria on minimum admission qualifications for OUK.
 - c) MoE to develop a National Policy Framework on open distance and e-learning.

CCTV Concept of 1990s

In view of the challenges of teaching large classes in 1990s, universities held a conference with UNESCO on the option of using closed circuit television (CCTV) technology in 1996 (UNESCO, 2000). This technology was to permit a simultaneous presentation of a subject/lecture to a large number of students or students spread in different lecture halls. Due to infrastructural logistics and cost this approach never took off.

Emergent of E-Learning: The Case of African Virtual University

The institutionalization of online learning in Kenya emerged in late 1990s when the World Bank financed the establishment AVU as an ICT driven institution with Kenyatta University and Egerton University being the founding partners. The whole idea behind AVU establishment was increasing access to higher education. As a project, the WB supported its operations including the delivery of short-term courses through both synchronous and asynchronous communication across all partner institutions in Africa from universities in USA, Scotland and Australia.

Like many donor projects, AVU collapsed in 2021. The peripheral impact of AVU to local partner institutions included: the establishment of Open Distance e-Learning (ODEL) centres, acquisition of computers and VSATs, support for the development of programs such as Applied Computer Science, creating consortium of academic staff to jointly develop modules, and catalyzing initiation of online learning programs. The greatest impact of AVU in higher education in the African continent include the development of over 1300 OERs that are available for use by all institutions across territorial boundaries. With this peripheral impact, the big question is: did we accommodate and assimilate the philosophy that underpinned the establishment of AVU? If so, why did COVID 19 pandemic find us unprepared or found our e-learning in fragile state and yet AVU had been in existence in Kenya for 20 years by then?

Dual Mode Development

As part of revenue generation, public universities started tuition paying streams in late 1990s. This led to the establishment of satellite campuses, evening and weekend classes. This came at the time the government had conceded to the World Bank pressure on university reforms and cost sharing. By 2000, all public universities had adopted the creation of self-sponsored streams including school-based and in some universities this stream raised up to 60% of the total revenue. However, this dual and semi-distance mode had serious flaws including:

- *Limited cross-border application.* The distance learning courses are largely restricted to the domestic economy and hence are available only those within the territory of Kenya.
- *Duality of assignments.* Lecturers who are assigned to facilitate those who study under distance learning stream are also assigned to teach on-campus students. They treat distance learning facilitation as a part-time assignment and give more attention to traditional students.
- *Low interactive delivery.* Course materials are not digitized and are made available to students in PDF, compendium, and lecture notes posted online.

- *Traditional management practices.* The practices being applied are conventional such as deferment, scheduled examinations, failure to physically attend 80% of class hours and hence not in compliant with ODL best practices.
- *Unsustainable venture:* The campuses that were established to cater for Module 11 stream of learners proved unsustainable.
- *'Open Learning'.* Using 'open learning' for marketing purposes only otherwise no traces of openness in institutional practices.
- *Peripheral presence.* ODL unit is treated and offered as peripheral unit within the university structure.
- *Limited resources.* ODL unit suffers from poor funding and staffing.
- *Low learner support services.* Lecturers treat their participation in teaching distance learners as a part-time assignment; learners have challenges accessing their course facilitators or getting prompt response; and due to delays in processing their assignments and examinations distance learners take longer time to graduate.
- *Low institutional championship.* The unit often the first target on downsizing and restructuring of the university.
- *'Cash cows' status of learners.* Use of distance learners as 'cash cows' of the institution. The resources received from distance learners are utilized by the institutions to develop facilities for the benefit of conventional students such as building additional classrooms and office blocks; and purchase of buses.

Enabling Legal Framework: Universities Act 2012

Equitable access to education at various levels are documented in various policy documents and statutes. At the university level, Universities Act of 2012 provides two distinctive elements of distance learning, namely: recognition that it is a specialized discipline that needs to stand alone in an education discourse; and promises under section 3 (2) (b) and (c) that in discharging its function a university shall enhance equity and accessibility to its services. The previous Universities Act of 1985 had no provision on distance learning. Distance learning reached its apex in this country when OUK was finally established in 2023 under this Act as a specialized University.

Covid 19 Pandemic Contribution

Though COVID 19 pandemic posed unprecedented challenges and negative impact on the delivery of social services including education, it raised conversations on the alternative ways of teaching and learning. When traditional system of education delivery that has been in place for centuries collapsed, institutions resorted to remote learning. Consequently, disparities in equitable access to learning resources were widened. A Communique¹ of the African Union STC-EST 3 noted on

¹ STC-EST3 Bureau of the Specialized Technical Committee on Education Science and Technology of the African Union

April 9th 2020 that the effects of COVID-19 were “worsening existing weaknesses in Africa’s Education systems”. The Communique further acknowledged “that unless we collectively act now to protect Education systems by providing alternative learning platforms and complementary programs, societies and economies will feel the burden long after COVID-19”. In Kenya, the Ministry of Education and the universities resorted to the use of various edtech to keep teaching and learning going. The long-lasting impact of COVID 19 on higher education has been enhancing and entrenching the acceptance and visibility of e-learning as a mode of learning.

What are Our Equity Barriers?

One misconception of equity is using high enrollment in university as a measure. Increase in students’ enrollment in university as a result of increased number of universities does not translate to equity. The overall enrolment among girls in university and in STEM programs is still lower than that of boys; those from remote locations are still excluded; and those with accumulated work experience are also excluded. Additionally, access barriers that have been identified include: cultural, socioeconomic, mode of study, policy induced and imposed, transhumance lifestyle, and technological. Open and distance learning has potential of addressing historical injustices that have inhibited access to education and thus promising a prosperous future that is equitable.

Cultural Barriers

Culture plays a role of either being a facilitator or an inhibitor of one’s success and participation in productive activities. In his book *The Achieving Society*, McClelland (1961) demonstrated that the disparities in economic development across societies of the world is rooted in culture. In his cross-cultural analysis of over 100 cultures that included the Chagga of Tanzania and the Kikuyu of Kenya, McClelland found that cultures that were economically better off had people with high need for achievement. In addition to believing in protestant ethics, he attributed the causes of the need to achieve to child-rearing practices that give children more independence and mastery in childhood and encourage taking calculated risks. This is a positive role of culture. However, in a multicultural society like Kenya, there are also prevalent negative aspects of culture that curtail individual’s socioeconomic development and educational achievement. There are still pockets of communities that do not value the education of girls. Their investment in girls’ education with respect to giving them opportunities to progress in education to higher levels is low (Mwakio, 2017).

Socioeconomic Barriers

In 2023, 16.1% of Kenyans live below international poverty line (World Bank, 2023). One of the factors that affect the standard of living and the ability of a family to provide services such as education is poverty. In educational context, poverty has significant impact on children’s access to equality education. The majority of those who meet the conventional university’s minimum entry requirement come from national and private high schools. These happen to be high-cost schools. From this perspective, socioeconomic status has already pre-selected potential university qualifiers.

Mode of Study Barriers

Traditional mode of study is a barrier to those who have other responsibilities or physical limitations. This mode assumes that all learners are either young or have no other responsibilities other than to study. There are other potential learners who are in confined situations or restricted by exigencies of duty or religious practices or distance or natural barriers.

Policy Induced Barriers

Policies that have been put in place have been intended to address challenges of equitable access to education at various levels arising out of an array of factors. However, these policies have led to the construction of exclusion in higher education. The greatest policy induced barriers have been:

- *The cut-off points for admission:* Universities peg their admission level on the basis of two things: operational cost, and the capacity of teaching and learning facilities. In view of relatively low fees charged by public universities because of government subsidy and their worldwide recognition and reputation, most qualified candidates prefer to enroll in public universities. In view of low absorption capacity of these universities particularly in 1990s and early 2000, they kept raising their cut-off points for admission. This policy lowered the chances of children who attended less endowed and resource constrained high schools from accessing programs of their choices at the university and hence perpetuated exclusion.
- *Financial support:* The financial support that has been intended to facilitate the less fortunate learners such as bursaries and loans have inbuilt challenges of identification, political patronage, and need assessment. There are reports that students report to university and then defer studies for failure to secure adequate financial support.
- *Scholarship:* This support is only for the best performers irrespective of socioeconomic status and hence average performers from poor backgrounds are outside this bracket.
- *Dual mode practice for online learners:* This framework has failed to provide equitable access and support services that enhance learning in two ways: first, access to this mode and stream of learning is based on ability to pay and second, low learner support services, a resource that is critical for the success of distance learners.
- *Denial of access to higher education on age grounds:* Government denial of financial support such as bursaries to learners who are over 25 years old.

Imposed Barriers: Free Trade Concept

The imposed barrier came in the form of imposition of free trade concept in education sector in developing nations by Bretton Woods Institutions. Contrast to the treatment and conception of education as public venture and a common good and hence a vehicle for promoting equity and inclusion, the conversion of universities in 1990s into free-markets for the sale of education under the World Trade Organization (WTO) banner of “trade in education services” was a blow to equity and inclusion in higher education. The World Bank enforced this free-market concept through loan lending practices and conditionalities.

Through the World Bank financed Universities Investment Project extended to the Kenya government in 1991, two things entered public universities’ scene. One was the start of students

paying tuition, meals and accommodation through loans and second, universities were expected to raise extra revenues. It is this concept of extra revenue generation and the high demand that forced universities to start Module II. By 2005, 85% of the candidates who achieved university eligibility grade of C+ and above at KCSE could not be admitted by public universities (Republic of Kenya, 2006). While the Module II stream increased access to university, it failed to enhance equity. Only those who were financially endowed accessed the university education (Wainaina, 2011; Republic of Kenya, 2006).

Transhumance Lifestyle Barriers

There are still pockets of people whose subsistence economy and livelihood involve constant movement from place to place. Access to education for such communities requires non-physical and flexible mode of delivery.

Technological Barriers

Learners with disabilities particularly the visually impaired learners have faced challenged when they are admitted to conventional universities without assistive technologies (Republic of Kenya, NESSP, 2018-2022).

The New Horizons of Distance Learning

Political Expediency and Landscape

Globally, education development and reforms are politically driven. Invariably, the establishment of public open universities including the Open University of United Kingdom, the Open University of Tanzania, and Zimbabwe Open University were anchored on and driven by the political agenda and leadership of political party in power. In Kenya, the mainstreaming of distance education and the establishment of the Open University remained dormant for decades despite the recommendations of various education commissions. It is the championship and the political goodwill of the current government that the Open University of Kenya was finally established in 2023.

Investing in Distance Learning

One of the World Bank's (2000) prescription for Africa's development in the 21st century is investing in the social sector. The establishment of OUK to move ODL from the periphery in the chain of education supply to the centre calls for new investment. Prosperous future that is equitable demands that a country invests in education provision that the lower income population can afford, the number that Collier (2008) referred to as "the bottom billion" and are locally called "the hustlers".

Reframing internalization concept

For a long time, we have looked at the concept of internalization of our universities in the form of attracting foreign students to our local institution (Republic of Kenya, 1981; Republic of Kenya, 2006; Republic of Kenya, 2023). What about exporting our programs?

The history of education shows that Kenya has been primarily an importer of higher education for a very long time. This importation is defined by WTO "mode of supply" summarized by Knight (2004, p. 9) as cross border supply, consumption abroad, commercial presence, and presence of natural persons. Though Kenya has remained primarily an importer based on the four WTO modes

of supply of education services, Kenyan universities have made attempts though insignificant to export education as follows:

- Egerton University: Twinning partnership with Western Michigan State University in early 2000 and offering of a military science program in South Sudan.
- Kenyatta University: Setting up a campus in Tanzania.
- Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology: Setting up a campus in Rwanda.
- Mount Kenya University: Campus now present in Rwanda.

The question is: is Kenya now ready to supply or export cross-border higher education? The answer is in affirmative. Advances in learning technologies have changed WTO supply mode 3 (commercial presence) and 4 (presence of natural persons). Taking advantages of these technological advances make supply mode 1 (cross border supply) viable mode for OUK's exportation of higher education from Kenya.

Depreciating Exclusion

Disparities in equitable access to educational opportunities arising out of inhibitions imposed by culture, socioeconomic status, induced policies, study mode and free trade concept that commercialized education need to be repaired. These practices have established exclusion as a norm. The question now is: how do all Kenyans share the prosperity envisaged in Kenya Vision 2030 if exclusion is not depreciated? UNESCO's (2021) states that "if education is to help transform the future, it must first become more inclusive by addressing past injustice" (p.23). OUK vision "innovative university for inclusive prosperity" intends to transform the learning ecosystem towards greater equity through:

- Openness

Why can a 66-years old applicant who has retired from active service and who got Division 4 in KCE or grade D in KCSE at the age of 18 not join a conventional university to pursue a degree of her/his choice? In adherence to its vision of inclusivity, OUK practices true meaning of openness with respect to: application of regular admission criteria; and admission through recognition of prior learning. Under these conditions, the above 66-years old applicant can be admitted to OUK provided he/she proves that she/he can succeed in a university program. Ability to succeed assessment is to safeguard the applicant's value for money.

- Flexibility

Flexibility with respect to OUK includes the following facets: asynchronous communication mode; choice of course load; introduction of micro credentials; provision of "a" learning-anytime, anyplace, and anywhere learning; examination on demand upon completion of a course on next offered examination time basis; and stepping out and stepping in depending on learner's exigencies of other responsibilities.

- Affordability

Affordability does not necessarily mean cheap. It is anchored on: fees paid on the basis of the number of courses taken; potential fees decline in the long run on the basis of economies of scale; technology choice; and elimination of accommodation fees.

- Equity Enhancing Technology

Disparities in learners' access to study materials can be attributed to many factors including devices and network at learner's disposal, some of which are beyond the control of the education provider, the Open University of Kenya. In this context, OUK is in control of technological soundness of the delivery mechanisms. The equity issue is: can the materials be delivered in forms that the learners can access? Online technologies that have been put in place that every learner can access and learn from them include: Google Drive for documents and presentation slides; and the Learning Management System (LMS) for group chats and discussion forum.

Further areas of Conversation and Contestation

Access gap still exists

While OUK is currently structured to handle access to higher education, what about those who for one reason or another cannot complete either primary or secondary education? In view of individual's constitutional rights with respect to access to education and SDG4 in respect to leaving nobody behind, the country needs a conversation on the extension of open and distance learning to primary and secondary sectors as promised by the Sessional Paper No 1 of 2005. Even with 100% transition policy of 2020, 16% drop out at end of four-year period.

Regulatory framework

OUK presents a new learning ecosystem. With the emergent of OUK, the regulations that govern the entire higher education ecosystem need a review including but not limited to:

- Collaboration

We need to look at institutional collaborations as guided by CUE in local and global context and ask ourselves: what are our regulations guarding against? What about process of customization of programs from other accredited universities? Are our regulations accommodating cross-breeding of programs for cross border consumption? What about emerging developments such as OERs and MOOCs?

- Assessment

The Outcomes Based Education (OBE), known in Kenya as CBC that is being implemented puts heavy weight on formative assessment or assessment for learning. It sounds good at the primary level. At the university level we ask ourselves: how do we do this without compromising quality and international acceptability of our grading? In this new learning ecosystem, we need a conversation on the new approach to assessment.

- Micro-credentialization of learning

This is an emerging development in Europe Union, Southeast Asia and Hong Kong. According to European Commission, European citizens will be able through micro credentials to start their

learning pathways into and through higher education at any stage in their life time by 2030. It has been seen as one way of creating flexibility in higher education and enhancing employability.

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