

## **Covid- 19 Pandemic And Its Impact On The Lecturers' And Students' Performance In Teaching And Learning At Kenyatta University, Kenya**

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### **Abstract**

The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic brought unprecedented disruptions in all aspects of human life across the globe. In the education sector, university calendars were re-scheduled and in-class learning was commuted to online platforms. The present study focused on performance of lecturers and students at Kenyatta University. The chosen institution has the second largest number of enrolled students and it is ranked as number 2 in Kenya. Performance, in this study, is broadly defined as 'the expectations placed on the lecturers and students during their stay at the University'. Performance during the post-Covid period has received little attention in literature relating to adjustments in universities. A case study approach was adopted within the broad mixed-methods research design. Interviews and questionnaires were used to obtain qualitative data. Quantitative data derived from questionnaires was computed into mean and Standard Deviation scores. This was further subjected to Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The Pearson-mark was also used to correlate the data. The findings indicated that interactive activities were drastically reduced during the post- Covid period; a significant number of classes and postgraduate defenses were postponed for various reasons. Make-up classes were created from time to time; reduced class attendance; failure by students to remain in classes throughout the entire class sessions; internet interruptions and numerous disconnections were reported. Modules were written as a stopgap measure for augmenting lost time. The paradigm shifts in pedagogical approaches impeded, to some extent, the lecturers and students' performance. Activities on proposal writing for funding and research activities were drastically reduced. In conclusion, the University lost heavily due the intermittent resurgence of the pandemic and a sluggish approach to confront it. The study recommends a robust online-based system of monitoring classes and postgraduate defenses; provision of internet for both students and lecturers in order to avoid numerous disconnections. Lastly, both students and lecturers should be proactive in order to surmount the Covid-19 related challenges.

**Key words** *Performance, e-trinities, monitoring, challenges, interactions, disruptions*

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Background to the Study**

Kenyatta University is one of the largest universities in Kenya. According to UniRank (2021), the University has a student population of over 45,000 and it is ranked position 2 n Kenya, 24 in Africa, and 2170 in the world, among the top best universities. This ranking is undoubtedly associated with the performance of both lecturers and students at the University. Performance, in this study, is limited to the expectations placed on the lecturers and students during their stay at the University. Prior to the Covid outbreak in early 2020, lecturers were required to prepare and attend all the classes assigned to them for teaching during the semester. They were also required to engage the students in learning activities in class throughout the lecture sessions. Among these activities were Continuous Assessment Tests (CATs) and quizzes, which are a formative form of

assessment whose ultimate purpose is that of ‘improving learning’ (p.17). Students on the other hand were required to attend all the ‘face- to face’ classes and do the assignments provided by the lecturers. All the students who attended the classes were required to sign a class attendance form. The lecturer also counter signed this form.

Following the outbreak of Corona, the classes were commuted to online teaching and learning. Like the other higher education learning institutions around the world, Kenyatta University invested heavily in online platforms. Among these online platforms are the Learning Management Systems (LMS) and Google Meet. These two platforms are capable of generating class attendance records for both students and lecturers. Google Meet also has the capability of audio recordings and lecturers are required to record the online classes and forward the recording links to their respective chairs of departments. This ensures that the University’s online facilitation is monitored by the Quality Management Systems (QMS) section.

While the University has sufficient quantitative data on class attendance and recordings, there is little information on the actual activities that happen in individual online classes. For instance, there is hardly any information on what actually happens in the online classes right from the moment the lecturer logs in and invites the first student, up to the time that he/she ends the class for everyone. This paper used the mixed methods approach to investigate the ‘real happenings’ which relate to lecturers’ and students’ performance during online class facilitation. These activities are juxtaposed with the activities, which went on during the face-to-face sessions.

In the next part of this paper, we present the statement of the problem. This is followed by the research objectives and the attendant research questions. The methodological approach that is adopted in the study is then described. This is followed by a presentation of findings, conclusions and recommendations.

### ***Statement of the Problem***

Kenyatta University has been ranked as position 2 in Kenya 24, in Africa and position 2170 in the world. The university has an elaborate quality management system (QMS) and its adherence to standards is confirmed by the ISO certification which is consistently renewed. The Academic Section, like any other sections in the organization, has well outlined QMS procedures, which are backed by records to ascertain whether the procedures have been met. Based on the University Calendar and upon the registration and enrollment of students, teaching timetable is prepared. Lecturers and students are expected to adhere to the timetable. Besides teaching students that are enrolled in their classes, lectures are also expected to provide a minimum of two Continuous Assessment Tests (CATS) and provide feedback for the same. Following the advent of Covid-19, the classes were commuted to online teaching. Consequently, there has been a dearth of literature relating to adjustments in teaching and learning. This study examines the performance of teaching and learning at Kenyatta University during the Corona period.

### **Research Objectives and Research questions**

The objectives of this study were to; assess lecturers’ and students’ teaching and learning performance, examine the challenges that lecturers and students face during teaching and learning, examine what the University management has done to assist the lecturers and students

to overcome the challenges and, proffer suggestions that the University can adopt to make it better prepared for future eventualities.

Hence the research questions;

- a) How is the teaching and learning performance of both lecturers and students rated by both students and lecturers?
- b) What challenges do lecturers and students face during teaching and learning?
- c) What has the University Management done to assist the lecturers and students to overcome the post- Corona challenges?
- d) How can the University be better prepared for future eventualities?

## **METHODOLOGY**

This subsection presents the research design, the sampling procedures as well as the data collection and analysis methods that were used in the study. A case study approach was adopted. This was premised within the broad mixed-methods research design. A Purposive sampling approach was adopted. Since this was a case study, all the students were drawn from Kenyatta University (KU). KU was selected because of its high student and lecturer population and proximity to the city center. The students are drawn from virtually all the regions across the country.

### **Piloting**

A pilot study was conducted to test both the instruments, and data collection procedures; and ascertain whether the whole study would take off. Two students and two lecturers, all from Machakos University were used in the piloting.

### **Sampling**

Fifteen lecturers were sampled in each of the 15 schools at the University. The *friend-of-a-friend* approach (Milroy, 1987, Milroy & Gordon, 2003) was used to obtain a sample of the lecturers who were willing to respond to the interview questions, as well as to provide the contacts of their class representatives. These lecturers were duly informed about the study objectives and they were requested to also inform their class representatives before sharing their phone contacts with the researchers. The researchers further contacted the students on phone and reiterated the objectives of the study. Two lecturers 'accepted' to participate in the study but they failed to respond to the interview questions which were sent to them two weeks before the scheduled Google Meet Interview. Consequently, two other lecturers from different departments within the same schools were contacted before the interview sessions. These replacement lecturers aptly replaced the descenders.

All the students who were referred by the lecturers were willing to participate in the study, and they aptly responded to the questionnaires, which were send to them by mail. These students were also class representatives and their views were regarded to more or less represent those of the entire classes that they were in. The students who were recommended to participate in the interview were either in 3<sup>rd</sup> year or Fourth year. These two groups of students had 'experienced the 'two worlds': that of learning before Corona, and learning after during the epidemic. The students also belonged to the Regular Group of students. This group was mainly taught only in the in-class mode before Corona struck. The other groups such as those from the Digital

School of Virtual and Open Learning (DSVOL) and the Continuing Education Program ( CEP) had variable experience with online teaching and were therefore, considered not ideal to respond to questions regarding the transition to online teaching.

The identities of the lecturers and the students, as well as the schools and departments where they belonged were coded as shown in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Sampling Frame**

1	Lec1	Dpt1	Sch1	Std1
2	Lec2	Dpt2	Sch2	Std2
3	Lec3	Dpt3	Sch3	Std3
4	Lec4	Dpt4	Sch4	Std4
5	Lec5	Dpt5	Sch5	Std5
6	Lec6	Dpt6	Sch6	Std6
7	Lec7	Dpt7	Sch7	Std7
8	Lec8	Dpt8	Sch8	Std8
9	Lec9	Dpt9	Sch9	Std9
10	Lec10	Dpt10	Sch10	Std10
11	Lec11	Dpt11	Sch11	Std11
12	Lec12	Dpt12	Sch12	Std12
13	Lec13	Dpt13	Sch13	Std13
14	Lec14	Dpt14	Sch14	Std14
15	Lec15	Dpt15	Sch15	Std15

**Data Collection**

Structured questionnaires group interviews were used to obtain data. The questionnaires had 14 questions, whose responses were based on Linkert Scale. These questions related to the same object of study for both the lecturers and students. This was designed to enable meaningful correlation during data analysis. (See Appendix ii and ii). Quantitative data was obtained from the subjects’ responses to questionnaires. Further, both lecturers and students were interviewed in online Google meet sessions. These sessions were recorded. The oral data was recorded using Bailey (2017) Open Broadcasting Software (OBS). The data recorded was annotated and transcribed in ELAN (Version 6.0) and segmented using Audacity.

**Data Analysis**

A total of 14 questions were asked to both lecturers and students. A Linkert scale to evaluate an aspect of performance in each of these questions helped the coding and subsequent quantification of the data for analysis. The statics of mean, standard deviation and Pearson- mark correlation were computed. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was also used to evaluate the significance of the mean scores obtained. The Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to compute these measures. Qualitative data was obtained from the interview sessions. Four open ended questions, each

relating to the research objectives (cf. 1.3) were asked to the participants during the Google Meet interview sessions for the lecturers and for the students. The narrative approach analysis was used to analyze and present the study findings for from the qualitative data. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), different sub-fields have adopted various types of narrative research. Among these is the ‘postmodern, organizational orientation’ Czarniawska (2004). In Czarniawska (2004: 43), data on stories told about organizations is usually collected in an interview, but also an observation technique. Czarniawska (2004) enumerates the procedure for organizational orientation narrative design as shown below:

- 1) Establishing general aims of an activity
- 2) Describing the unit and the actors
- 3) Choosing an incident
- 4) Description of the critical incident
- 5) Critical judgments of the observer may be included but must be clearly separated

In this study, the general aims of the activity comprise the statement of the problem, the objectives and the research questions. The ‘unit and the actors’ in the study refer to the University and the students. The incident is teaching and learning performance, and description of the incident relates to the subjects’ responses during the interviews. The critical judgments of the observer relate to the recommendations provided.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

As noted in the Methodology Section, 14 research questions were designed to provide answers relating to the first study objective namely; to assess lecturers’ and students’ teaching and learning performance during teaching and learning. The first two questions in both the students’ and lecturers’ questionnaires required the subjects to rate their performance in relation to class attendance, both before and after Corona. Both the students and lecturers rated their class attendance highly with an equal frequency score of 7 and 9 for rank 1 and rank 2 respectively, during the online classes. None of the subjects rated themselves lower than 2. Before Corona, the level of class attendance by lecturers and students was lower. Majority of the subjects rated themselves highly, but a few students and lecturers indicated lower class attendance levels than they recorded in the online classes. For instance, a lecturer who indicated a rank of 4 for his face-to-face class attendance also mentioned, during the interview, that there was no room for multitasking during the face- to- face sessions and absenteeism was common because of the need to travel from the campus where he taught to attend physical meetings at main campus such as exam moderation, post-graduate defenses and other official functions.

The students were asked to rate their lecturers class attendance during and before Corona in in Question 3 and Question 4, respectively. 53 percent of the students gave a rank of 2 (good) and 20 percent of the students rated their lecturers’ class attendance in the third rank (‘average’). The lecturers on the other hand, indicated that some of the student’s class performance was below average as demonstrated in Table 2 and 3 below.

**Table 2: Lecturers’ rating of students’ class attendance before Corona**

Q3					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	2	13.3	13.3	13.3
	2	9	60.0	60.0	73.3
	3	2	13.3	13.3	86.7
	4	2	13.3	13.3	100.0
	Total	15	100.0	100.0	

**Table 3: Lecturers’ rating of students’ class attendance after CoronaQ4**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	2	13.3	13.3	13.3
	2	10	66.7	66.7	80.0
	3	1	6.7	6.7	86.7
	4	2	13.3	13.3	100.0
	Total	15	100.0	100.0	

From the data presented in the two tables, it is clear that more students fail to attend classes during the online teaching. These findings are statistically significant as evidenced by the ANOVA statistics presented in Appendix vi. This may be attributed to the fact that in the in-class teaching sessions, majority of the students stay within the University premises. One of the students during the oral interviews told the panel that one of her major challenges of online teaching was that while at home, there were other domestic chores that were ‘competing for the hours with the scheduled classes’.

The 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> questions relate to the level of interaction between lecturers and students during both online and face-to-face classes, respectively. There was variable rating of integration in class by both lecturers and students for the online classes as well as the face-to-face classes (see Appendix v. This variability may be attributed to the individual class student-lecturer interaction. This attests to the fact that interaction in every class, irrespective of the mode of teaching, is dependent on the students and lecturer relations.

The next two questions relate to timely attendance to CATs and quizzes. The face-to-face CATs were administered and done in a timelier manner than the online cats. The students rated their own timely attendance to CATs higher than the lecturers, who have indicated several tokens of ‘below average’ self-evaluation CATs and Quizzes admiration. During the oral interview, two lecturers indicated that the online schedules were often overwhelming since lecturers were also tasked with other duties such as Modules writing attendance to online defenses.

As relates to provision of feedback on CATs and quizzes, the lecturers evaluated themselves higher than the way the students evaluated them. The two tables below manifest this discrepancy.

**Table 4 Students Rating of Lecturers’ Provision of Feedback on online CATS**

**Q11**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	6	40.0	40.0	40.0
	2	6	40.0	40.0	80.0
	3	3	20.0	20.0	100.0
	Total	15	100.0	100.0	

**Table 5 Lecturers’ Rating of their Provision of Feedback on online CATS**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	8	53.3	53.3	53.3
	2	5	33.3	33.3	86.7
	3	2	13.3	13.3	100.0
	Total	15	100.0	100.0	

The same pattern of a higher self-evaluation is also evident in the face-to-face sit in CATS (See Appendix v). While it is expected that subjects will do a higher self-evaluation, this outcome needs further investigation to determine why a significant number of students are not content with the nature of feedback provided by their lecturers. This will inform the educators on whether other pedagogical approaches need to be adopted so as enhance quick and effective feedback of formative evaluation.

The last two questions asked both the students and lecturers about how often they conducted personal reading and research during both online and the pre-Corona period. The data showed that lecturers created more time to conduct their personal reading than the students during the period before Corona. However, both lecturers and students do not significantly differ in terms of how much time they allocate for personal reading. The majority of the subjects from the two groups indicated that they either ‘frequently’ or ‘less frequently’ found time to conduct their personal reading. (See Appendix v).

In the interview questions, the subjects were asked to compare their teaching/learning performance before Corona with their performance after. Both the lecturers and students indicated that life was ‘better’ and more predictable before Corona struck. The lecturers indicated that online teaching was sometimes overwhelming; since they also had other official duties to do such as the writing of modules, marking of examinations as well as attending to

meetings and post-graduate defenses. Students on the other hand treasure the moments when they were in campus or outside residence, away from home, where they did not have to do multiple chores besides their learning tasks. Several students also mentioned that consultation hours with the lecturers in their offices were much better than online interaction.

When asked to describe some challenges that they faced during the online classes, both the lecturers and students indicated the issue of connectivity whereby they would be disconnected when the classes were going on. Students also mentioned that internet was expensive and sometimes, they were forced to subscribe to data which was more expensive because some of the cheaper internet providers were not available in some locations across the country.

Asked about how these challenges can be surmounted, both lecturers and students suggested that the University could negotiate with the main internet service providers to avail cheaper internet for classes. All the students should also be provided with learning tablets to enable them access the learning modules and class sessions without the hindrances that were common whenever they used their mobile phones. A student also pleaded to the University to communicate with parents so that they (parents) could free them from the numerous domestic chores that they were assigned because of their 'presence at home'.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Conclusion**

It is abundantly clear that Covid 19 interrupted learning in all the institutions the world. The implications of the interruptions were felt in the education sector as well as on the economy. However, it may not be easy to quantify the losses but it ran into trillion sterling pounds. However, universities and countries responded differently depending on their financial and educational capability. Although the lecturers were retooled on the new pedagogical skills but some have grudgingly embraced the new changes. The Government of Kenya as well as the universities out of their meagre resources had to spend money on purchasing more facilities /equipment. Finally, the students lost in terms of time and lost job opportunities. Therefore, the paper avers that the government, lecturers and Universities should invest more in disaster management and become more proactive in order to stay afloat in times of calamities.

### **Recommendations**

The paper recommends the following:

First; the universities should invest heavily in research in order to forestall the dangers in future.

Second; the lecturers should be ready to adopt and adjust to the new pedagogical approaches.

Third; the students should be able to diversify their thinking and rise to the challenge in case of uncertainties.

Forth; the government should at all times be ready to cushion the students as well as the universities in times of calamities.

Fifth; a revolving fund should be created at all levels in order to assist the vulnerable students in case of uncertainties in the universities.

Sixth; internet connectivity and band width should be strengthened and extended to every part of the country. This development would assist the students to take classes where ever they are without a hitch. They should on the other hand be assisted to purchase data bundles without strain.



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