

ABSTRACT

Globally, education plays a fundamental role in human capital development in both developed and developing countries. Consequently, the performance of the higher education institution worldwide is of great interest to any stable state. However, there have been growing concerns over the performance of the universities globally. Though it is evidence in literature that performance excellence of any organization depends on a number of factors; social factors, environmental and culture among others, drivers of performance excellence in universities in Kenya have not been adequately researched. The general objective of the study was to explore drivers of performance excellence of universities in Kenya. Specific objective of the study was to analyse drivers (leadership, people management, resources, partnership and collaboration, internationalisation, policy and strategy, processes, product and services) of performance excellence in universities in Kenya, explore the gaps in drivers of performance excellence, compare the drivers for public and private universities and develop a framework for assessing performance excellence for universities in Kenya. The study was guided by positivist philosophy and therefore tested the model of university performance excellence and employed descriptive research design. The data was collected through the drop and pick method. The sampling frame was all the 40 accredited universities in Kenya as at July, 2016, from which 12 universities were selected. The target population was all the 545 deans, directors, chairpersons of the selected universities. Using Yamane's formula, a proportionate sample size of 277 respondents was selected. Primary data was collected through a self-administered structured questionnaire. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for data analysis; descriptive statistics, factor analysis and linear regression. Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) test of normality, Durbin-Watson d test for autocorrelation and correlation coefficient (r) were used to assess data for suitability for linear regression. Model fitness (R-Square), Analysis of variance and regression coefficients were generated. Results were presented using interactive tables and figures. Based on the study findings, all the variables were found to be independently statistically significant as drivers of performance excellence. The combined regression results indicated that approximately 81.4% of variations in performance excellence of universities in Kenya were explained by the seven regressors. In public universities leadership, people management, resources, policy and strategy and internationalisation were significance while in private universities; leadership, partnership and collaboration, resources, policy and strategy and processes, product and services were statistically significance. The findings indicated that 78.6% and 95.1% of variations in performance excellence in public and private universities in Kenya respectively were explained by the seven predictors. This study contributes to theory by developing a modified framework for drivers of performance excellence in academic institutions. The study also identifies the gaps and recommends to universities' management and policy makers nationally and internationally on areas of focus in their effort to achieve performance excellence.