

Relationship between Instruction Cultures and Students' Retention in Chartered Christian Universities in Kenya

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ABSTRACT:

The role of this study was to establish the relationship between instruction cultures and student retention in Chartered Christian Universities in Kenya. The study was based on Students' Integration Theory by Tinto (1993) and Cultural Model of Educational Management by Bush (2011). Descriptive survey research design was adopted. The targeted population was 604 year four students, 12 Academic Deans, 5 chaplains, 5 Finance Managers, and 5 Deans of students in the Chartered Christian Universities. Census method was used to sample the respondents. Interviews and questionnaires were employed in collecting data. The questionnaire was piloted and then tested for reliability using test-retest method and was validated by experts. Qualitative data was analysed and presented. Quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics. SPSS version 22 was applied in data analysis. Pearson Product Moment Correlations Co-Efficient and regression analysis were computed to establish relationships between the two variables. Embedded Design for mixed methods was used to integrate and present quantitative and qualitative data outcomes. It was found out that religious cultures were related to student retention ($r=0.482$; $p=0.000$) and therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected while the alternate hypotheses adopted. The study recommends that chartered Christian universities in Kenya should take advantage of their religious cultures and should find policies to strengthen the existing cultures as they develop new ones. Additionally, the Ministry of Education should develop policies that could facilitate student retention and review the existing policies on students' retention in institutions of higher learning. Moreover, further research should be conducted.

Key Terms: Student retention, chartered Christian universities, religious cultures, instruction cultures, discipline cultures, study cost management cultures.

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Introduction

Globally, the role of organisational culture in influencing organisational effectiveness has been echoed and re-echoed at length in many management studies (Mbabazize, Mucunguzi, & Daniel, 2014). According to Kalaierasi and Sethuram (2017), organisational culture is widely considered to be one of the most significant factors of organisation variables. This is because organisational culture significantly influences behaviour at work, managerial practices, organisational effectiveness and efficiency. University cultures which are the specific aspects of organisational culture within the context of higher education institutions have also attracted a plethora of scholarly studies because of their perceived influence on institutional activities, processes, and outcomes (Zhang, 2012; Divan, 2012, Tinto, 2012; McPherson, 2016). According to Zhang (2012), a university culture refers to the collective, mutually shaping patterns of practices, norms, values, beliefs, and assumptions that guide the behaviour of individuals and groups in an institute of higher education. Although students' retention is considered the single most important issue facing universities worldwide (Gajewski & Mather, 2015), there is limited research in Kenya on the relationship between university cultures and students' retention in Chartered Christian Universities and other institutions of higher learning.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Instruction Cultures and Retention in Chartered Christian Universities

Instruction is at the heart of any institution of higher learning. It is common knowledge that after matriculation, the next most important thing for a university student is to begin the process of learning through formal lecture attendance and informal social interactions. Associated with formal learning is student assessment whose ultimate

end is graduation. Graduation marks the formal completion of a programme of study.

According to Khalil and Elkhider (2016), learning theories provide the basis for the selection of instructional strategies and allow for dependable prediction of their effectiveness. To attain effective learning outcomes, lecturers use the science of instruction and instruction design models to guide the growth of instructional design strategies that evoke appropriate cognitive processes. Teachers play a critical role in the entire instruction process. This explains why there are a plethora of research studies on the effectiveness of teachers (Koc & Celik, 2015). Effectiveness of teachers is however affected by many other factors which in turn affect the instruction processes.

Globally, one major difference between public and private universities is class sizes or a lecturer-student ratio (Koc & Celik, 2015). Several research studies carried out in different countries have linked class size to learning outcomes, class control, student engagement, student assessment and students' attitude to learning among others (Yusuf, Onifade, & Bello, 2016; Monks & Schmidt, 2010; Mulryan-Kyne, 2010; Court, 2012; Ajani & Akinyele, 2014). Although there is no clear agreement on the appropriate or ideal class sizes in terms of actual student numbers, it is apparent from these studies that class sizes are crucial to effective and efficient teaching/learning processes. Since class size is an important concept and issue among education scholars, there is a need to establish whether it has any influence on students' desire to continue with their studies until completion in one university. This study was carried out with this aim in mind in the context of chartered Christian universities in Kenya.

In the USA, scholars find a convergence of opinion on the influence of class size in general but differ in detail (Monks

& Schmidt, 2012; Mulryan-Kyne, 2010). While Monks and Schmidt (2012) argue that class sizes affect students' assessments, Mulryan-Kyne (2010) admits that there are indeed problems associated with large class sizes but suggests that lecture method is part of the problem and should be discouraged in favour of learner-centred approaches. Schwartz, Schmitt, and Lose (2012) link small class size to the effective teaching of students with special needs in the USA. In the UK, Court (2012) posit that student-staff ratio (emphasis added) is being used as a fundamental measure in the provision of higher education and is considered key to accreditation of institutions of higher learning due to inherent implications on quality education. As noted earlier, these studies did not link small class sizes to students' retention in universities. For this reason, this study aimed at establishing if such a relationship existed in chartered Christian universities in Kenya.

Koc and Celik (2015) state that the number of students per teacher is generally associated with class size, and it is mainly believed that smaller classes provide a better teaching and learning. They note that the belief is shared by many countries like the USA, European countries, China, Japan, and many other countries. Accordingly, the average class size has been decreased in many countries. In Nigeria, large class sizes have been linked to poor academic performance and negative attitude of learners (Yusuf, Onifade, & Bello, 2016). The huge numbers per class increase learner anonymity and make some learners not to take their work seriously. Based on these studies, it is apparent that most countries have taken measures to address the problem of class sizes with the primary objective being to improve the quality of the learning process and experiences to both the teachers and the learners. For some countries like Nigeria, the challenge of managing large class sizes is yet to be controlled. In light of differing realities in different countries, the influence of

class sizes can be either positive or negative. Due to scarce substantive literature in place, this study was carried out in Kenya for the purpose of establishing the influence of class sizes on students' retention in chartered Christian universities.

In Kenya (Mukhanji, Ndiku & Obaki, 2016), the high enrolment in public universities has resulted in high student-lecturer ratios which in turn hinder instructional effectiveness and outcome. This situation has led to stakeholders raising questions on the instruction processes and quality of education provided in Kenyan public universities. While private universities in Kenya have low student enrolment compared to Chartered Public Universities, the enrolment levels in some of the private universities is insignificantly too low (CUE, 2016). From the CUE report, it is apparent that Chartered Christian Universities, in particular, have the lowest students' enrolment among private universities and have, on average, the smallest class's sizes per unit of study. However, except when such low students' enrolment does not make economic, the engagement levels in such is expected to be highest. At the moment, there is scarce literature in Kenya on the influence of small class sizes on students' retention in chartered Christian universities.

Research points to a relationship between class sizes and quality learning, students' satisfaction, and stakeholders' satisfaction (Mukhanji, Ndiku & Obaki, 2016; Court, 2012). The concept of quality learning is broad and includes many aspects of the learning processes. One such aspect is student assessment and feedback. Globally, feedback of learning assessment is recognised as an important part of the learning cycle (Spiller, 2014; Hernández, 2012). The feedback process is of interest to both the learners and the lecturers.

Rawlusk (2018) argues that ongoing academic concerns have been raised on whether assessment practices in higher education support student learning. He observes that, due to the overemphasis on examinations as the main focus of students' assessment, learning has adversely been affected. This is because, ordinarily, effective assessment for learning should result in the active engagement of students. It becomes an irony, then when the outcome of an assessment process culminates in poor students' engagement. The author argues further that, based on an empirical study, there is limited involvement of learners in assessment strategies, which in turn has an impact on learning. The study recommends, therefore, the need for teachers to utilise their professional development in order to understand how to optimise the active participation of students in various authentic assessment methods and feedback. It is clear from the finding that, while students' assessment should go hand and in hand with feedback, there is a need for effective strategies to help ensure that students are actively engaged throughout the process.

According to Evans (2013), a focus on assessment feedback from a higher education (HE) perspective is pertinent given the overarching need to enhance student access, retention, completion, and satisfaction within college and university contexts. Students' satisfaction is the outcome of students' experiences in social and academic environments. Students' academic assessment feedback is an integral part of instruction processes which fall within the larger domain of the academic environment. As avers by the author, students' academic assessment feedback influence, among other things, students' retention, which is a key area of concern to any institution of higher learning. She views assessment feedback as including all feedback exchanges generated within assessment design, being overt or covert (actively and/or passively searched and/or received), occurring within and beyond the immediate learning context, and importantly, drawing

from a range of sources. From the foregoing, it is apparent that assessment feedback occupies an integral part of the assessment process. While assessment may be viewed as a measurement tool, assessment feedback provides the outcome of the measurement. Based on the existent literature, there is limited information on whether student assessment and feedback influence students' retention in institutions of higher learning. This study was carried out with this aim in mind.

In Hong Kong, students prefer receiving feedback at an early stage of their learning process so that they may identify their own problems and improve their learning (Chan, 2010). The challenge of large class sizes, however, gives challenges to teachers because they are unable to give detail, constructive and individualised feedback to learners. In Ghana, the problem of large size classes is viewed as appalling and as a headache to lecturers because they are not able to give quality assessment and feedback to students (Yelkper, Namale, Esia-Donkoh, & Ofosu-Dwamena, 2012). Although these studies have shown the importance of assessment feedback in the learning process, they have not established if this practice influence students' retention in universities.

In Kenya, public universities have been described as producing half-baked graduates because the learning process has been compromised by huge numbers at the expense of effective learning processes (Mukhanji et al., 2016). The huge numbers tilted the student-lecturer ratio and created an inbuilt weakness in the academic assessment process and feedback loops. Thus, without adequate assessment, there can be no effective learning. Although Chartered Christian Universities in Kenya have low student enrolment arising from low student choice (CUE, 2016), there is limited literature in place which shows the relationship between assessment feedback and students' retention in universities. Due to this apparent gap

in knowledge, this study sought to fill this gap in the context of chartered Christian universities.

Closely connected to students' assessment feedback is student engagement in the learning process. Research shows that student engagement is valuable to effective learning (Blatchford, Bassett, & Brown, 2011; van de Grift et al., 2017). Student engagement is used here to refer to the degree of attention, interest, curiosity, optimism, and passion that students showed when they were taught or learning, which extends to the level of motivation they ought to have to be able to progress in their education (Great School Partnership, 2014).

According to Xhomara (2018), students' engagement is meant to be the most important variable that influences the active learning of students at the university. At the same time student engagement is meant to be important variables that impact the academic achievements of students. Based on this understanding, student engagement is a critical component of the learning process. Ashwin and McVitty (2015) consider student engagement as the formation of understanding and should, therefore, focus on ways in which students transform the knowledge that they engage in as part of their courses and on how they are transformed by this knowledge. According to them, the focus should be on the partnership between academics and students as they work together in learning and teaching interactions in order to construct knowledge. Part of this process includes having students be engaged in authentic research projects in order to produce academic work. They argue that the focus should be on the way in which knowledge changes students as they interact with it, and the ways students also translate knowledge as they make sense of it. This is a nutshell means instead of seeing students engaging with a fixed object of knowledge, the focus should instead be on how students and knowledge are transformed by this

engagement. Successful students' engagement process should lead to increased satisfaction on the part of students which may, in turn, influence the decision to continue with their studies in the same university. Important as this may be, there is scarce literature in place showing the influence of effective engagement of students on students' retention. This was the main focus of this study.

According to Olson and Reece (2015), student engagement is necessary for students to gain knowledge and skills to succeed in post-secondary programmes and future careers. They emphasise that teachers' role in student engagement is very crucial. Thus, apart from the teaching and learning styles teachers employ, teachers can also create opportunities for active rather than passive learning, create relevance in assignments, create authentic assessments, offer timely feedback, and nurture a culture of inquiry within the classroom. Even though student engagement is an important concept in the learning process, there was scarce literature linking its influence on students' retention in university. Thus, there was a gap in knowledge on the influence of university cultures on students' retention in Chartered Christian Universities in Kenya.

Several studies on student engagement do acknowledge its role in quality instructional practices in higher education institutions. A study in New Zealand (Exeter et al., 2010) points to an increasing recognition of the value of student engagement in developing knowledge in higher education institutions. This recognition has resulted in the need for active learning approaches in order to increase the potential for student engagement. The study, however, notes that effective student engagement becomes more challenging as the number of students increases in a class.

A comparative study of students' engagement in South Korea and Netherlands (van de Grift et al., 2017) found out

that a combination of teaching strategies and methods can enhance student engagement and in turn promote quality learning. In Kenya, Butucha (2016) emphasises the need to prioritise student engagement in higher education because the learning environment has changed courtesy of technological advancements. He noted that face booking, tweeting, short messaging, and chatting had become alternative competitors for students' attention; thus, student engagement in universities should be deliberate and intentional. In general, there was limited research on the influence of students' engagement on students' retention in a university, thus the significance of this study which focused on students' retention in Chartered Christian Universities in Kenya.

The teachers' role in fostering quality and effective learning has been accounted for by many scholars (Henard & Roseveare, 2012; Suryahadi & Sambodho, 2013; Greatbatch & Holland, 2016; Asiyai, 2014). Tied to teachers' effectiveness are well-equipped libraries, student support services and other relevant facilities and resources (Akareem & Hossain, 2016). Teachers' role is thus critical and inevitable in any context of learning. For the teacher to carry out this role, he/she needs to manage time well, mentor the learners, be a role model for the learners to emulate, employ effective teaching approaches, engage the learners, provide timely feedback and discourage any form of academic malpractices.

Nagoba and Mantri (2015) view quality learning as the education that best fits the present and future needs of the learners. It is thus the education that provides students with the tools to deal with and find solutions to challenges confronting mankind. In a rapidly changing world in the area of technology and other pertinent areas, the likelihood of what was considered quality education in the past may not be understood as quality education in the years to come. Quality education should not be seen as a

process of consumption but as a process of interaction between teachers and students. Thus, quality education can never be a neutral process because it will always be value-based. The primary aim of quality education should be to give students opportunities for personal development as well as the confidence to adapt to new situations when they find that necessary. This then makes the role of the teacher, both critical and crucial in the teaching and learning processes. For this reason, the two scholars emphasise that the success of any education system relates to the quality of teachers, which, also depends on the effective learning/teaching process. Based on this view, teachers then play a key role in the development of the education system as a whole and also in maintaining and imparting the standards of higher education. With this in mind, there is a need, therefore, to establish whether the teachers' role in an institution of higher learning influence students' decision to study to completion in the same institution. This was the main focus of this study in chartered Christian universities in Kenya.

According to Sahito, Khawaja, Panhwar, Siddiqui and Saeed (2016), time management for a teacher means the maximum use of time for productivity and achievement. This is because time is a resource and an asset to any organisation and considered the difference between successful and non-successful institutions of higher learning. Time is also considered as part of effective classroom management (Aldahadha, 2017). Indicators of effective time management include punctuality in class, regular class attendance, well-planned lessons, syllabus coverage, and timely feedback on assessment and timely completion of studies. Although the studies on the above indicators have been carried out in different countries. None of the studies have linked time management to students' retention in a university.

Concerning punctuality and regular class attendance, scholars in Pakistan (Khalid & Mehmood, 2014) opine that regular class attendance fulfils several important goals of higher education. It encourages the students to organise their thinking by comparing new ideas. It plays a key role in enhancing student performance because it helps the student to submit an assignment on time, enhance collaboration among students, improve the overall student performance, and improve coordination with teachers and peers among other benefits. Absenteeism, on the contrary, negates every potential gain.

According to Butakor and Boatey (2018), teachers' attendance in classes has been identified as a factor that plays a key role in students' attendance in school. They argue that for teachers to be punctual in class attendance, there is a need for effective supervision. Therefore, the major supervision roles performed by the principals include monitoring of teachers' attendance during lessons, checking and ensuring sufficiency of scheme of work, checking and ensuring adequate preparation of lesson notes, record of work, monitoring of curriculum delivery, provision of instructional materials and teachers' reference books, and regular review and feedback of students' academic performance with stakeholders. Among other supervisory ways, spending some time in a classroom to observe teachers will reveal areas of weakness and the steady usage of instructional materials. This may lead to good teaching skills because the use of external examiners may make teachers behave in a manner likely to convince the supervisors that they were doing well yet after they disappear, they revert to the old ways of doing things. Internal supervision under the leadership of the principal, on the other hand, may lead to consistency time management which may, in turn, lead to effective service delivery on the part of the teachers. However, in the absence of supervisory roles, absenteeism and lateness to class may thrive and result in what the two scholars

consider as symptoms of weak teacher management structures (Butakor & Boatey, 2018).

Mampane (2013), in a study in South Africa, identified some of the factors causing teachers to be absent as stress due to financial challenges, family problems and curriculum changes. The study noted that teacher absenteeism affects school effectiveness, results in loss of school days, diminish student academic achievement, damage the school's reputation, and creates and sustains student absenteeism. The two studies did not establish if teachers' time management influence students' retention in a university. This study intended to establish if such influence existed for students' retention in chartered Christian universities.

Some of the factors causing teachers absenteeism in Kenya include the lack of supervision, frequent teachers' strikes, and heavy workloads, among others (Musyoki, 2015). It is common knowledge that Chartered Christian Universities in Kenya hardly experience teachers' strikes. They also have few students (CUE, 2016) and implicitly have stronger control of teachers, and thus fewer cases of teacher absenteeism compared to Chartered Public Universities. However, studies have been done to establish if lecturers' time management in general influence students' retention in Chartered Christian Universities.

Finally, timely completion of studies indicates adherence to the course and programme schedules, completion of course content, assessment, and feedback to students. It is Common knowledge that completion of studies within the stipulated time is the goal of every student. A study of large universities in the USA (Veenstra & Herrin, 2006) found out that private universities had higher completion rates than public universities. In Nigeria, Albar and Onye (2016) observe that completion rates in public universities were very low because of frequent lecturer strikes. In contrast, the completion rate in private universities is

higher because lecturers are committed to teaching with little disruption of studies. The high completion rate in private universities has not been studied to establish if it influences students' retention in the universities.

In Kenya, as in Nigeria, completion rates in public universities is low because of frequent lecturer strikes and absentee lecturers (CUE, 2016). Although some private universities in Kenya have somewhat high dropout rates due to various reasons (Njoroge, Wang'eri & Gichure, 2016), graduation rates are still higher compared to Chartered Public Universities. As per CUE (2016) report, Chartered Christian Universities in Kenya have relatively high completion rates. Despite this reality, there was limited literature on whether the high completion rates in Chartered Christian Universities influence students' retention in the universities. This study sought to achieve this purpose.

The significant roles teachers play in university education is affirmed by the numerous studies on the topic (Kudryashova, Gorbatova, Rybushkina, & Ivanova, 2015; Pushkar, 2015); Sultana, Yousuf, Naseer, Rehman, 2009). A plethora of other empirical studies have looked specifically at the role of a teacher as role models and mentors (Wainaina, Mwisukha, & Rintaugu, 2015; Barlow, Frick, Barker, & Phelps, 2014); Ponnaivaikko, 2012; Monteiro, Almeida, & Vasconcelos, 2012). According to Nagoba and Mantri (2015), institutions of higher learning are dependent on qualified and competent teachers for quality and effective learning. Teachers enhance quality education through commitment, dedication, and motivation of learners, imparting value-based education, use of resources and development of education, among other ways.

In a study in Slovenia, Šteh, & Kalin, & Mažgon (2014) noted that among other roles, teachers engage and motivate students to acquire knowledge, enable them to

demonstrate their knowledge and understanding through performance and action, help students to engage in critical thinking, help them to develop abilities to navigate the complexities and constraints of the world, help the students to foster lifelong commitment to critical examination and self-development, and in a nutshell, encourage students to engage in cognitive, affective and social developments. The role of a teacher in this perspective is not only to transmit knowledge but to involve students as partners in the educational process. Even then, the study did not show if any relationship exists between teachers' instructional roles and students' retention in university.

In South Africa, Bernstein (2015) notes the critical role teachers' play in effective instruction process and states that for quality teaching and learning to take place in a university, teachers must be qualified and competent. The paper calls on the government of South Africa to invest more in teacher education programmes because quality teachers produce quality students.

In Kenya, a study of the academic staff of public universities (Wainaina, Mwisukha & Rintaugu, 2015) observed that one of the key roles and responsibilities of academic staff in a university is to nurture the intellectual capacity of their learners by imparting knowledge and skills. Teachers also play a fundamental role in moulding the behaviour and character of their learners. Chartered Christian Universities in Kenya advocates for the integration of faith and learning with the faculty at the centre of the integration process (Kaul et al., 2017). In this context, the role of the teacher is more critical and more influential. However, there were limited studies done to examine the scope of this influence and whether it influences students' retention in a university.

Examination malpractices or cheating have been associated with instruction practices in universities. Examination malpractice may be referred to as misconduct or improper practice, before, during or after any examination by examinees or others with a view to obtaining good results by fraudulent means (Khan, Khan, & Khan, 2012; Akaranga, 2013). Available literature shows the worst-hit countries are Russia (Denisova-Schmidt, 2017), Nigeria (Dusu, Gotan, Deshi & Gambo, 2016; Amadi, 2018) and Pakistan (Khan, Khan, & Khan, 2012).

Globally, academic dishonesty is an issue of great concern. According to Ayieko, students engage in cheating and in other forms of examination malpractices because of perceived benefits. She posits that the vice which has since become a culture in many schools due to overemphasis on passing exams as a criterion for academic success. She identified different ways of examination irregularities as including sneaking in unauthorised materials, writing on clothes and body parts, copying from each other during examinations, replacement of answer sheets, and fraudulent modification of examination marks. She added other forms of irregularities such as sitting for examination on behalf of someone else, prior knowledge of examination questions by students and colluding with examination officials such as supervisors and invigilators. All these irregular and unethical practices are a violation of institutional rules and regulations which, if allowed, will lead to devaluation of certificates obtained, dented image for the institutions affected and undue advantage to the students involved in the vice. This may, in turn, lead to poor students' retention due to dropouts for one reason or the other. Given the limited literature on the influence of examination practices on students' retention, this study aimed at determining such a relationship exists.

In Russia, Denisova-Schmidt (2017) observes that the inherent malpractices in examinations have been termed as

'corruption' because they are widespread and have taken political dimensions. Thus, more than 85% of examination malpractice cases in Russia take place in public universities with some involving bribery, preferential treatments, and non-monetary favours in exchange for good grades. In order to prevent the high prevalence of examinations irregularities, the scholar suggests that the faculty should demonstrate their assignments and expectations more clearly to the students and stipulating their educational and cultural backgrounds. She notes that, in some cultures, students might have a different concept of plagiarism which might make it appear as though it was acceptable. She observes that some material might be widely considered to be common knowledge and therefore require to be cited. She thus recommends that Russian students need to be taught such basic concepts as a precise definition of plagiarism in their academic writing courses. Other intervention measures may include additional courses on academic integrity in order to increase the levels of awareness significantly. In addition, faculty members should serve as role models. The study, however, did not establish if Examination malpractices influence students' retention in universities and other institutions of higher learning. This study aims at establishing if such a relationship exists in chartered Christian universities in Kenya.

In Nigeria, Dusu et al. (2016), observe that examination malpractices have had devastating effects in the countries education system. They note that due to the high prevalence, the countries educational system has gradually degenerated to a level where the country's certificate has come into questioning locally and internationally because the sanctity of education process has been affected by the malpractices.

For example, according to Onyibe, Uma and Ibina (2015), students in Nigeria have devised innovative ways through

which they perpetrate examination malpractices in every examination. They observe that the instances of examination malpractices and may range from impersonation, leakage of questions, tampering with results, and computer fraud. Specifically, they identified some of the common forms of examination irregularities in Nigeria as follows. First, collusion among candidates themselves and between them and examination officials. In the first, the candidates copy from each other while in the second, the examination officials may leak the examination materials to the intended examinees, parents or school managers prior to the examination time. Collusion may lead to mass cheating in examination. Second, impersonation. This is where another candidate or a hired person sits for examination on behalf of the genuine candidate. Third, giraffing. This is a process in which an examinee stretches out his or her neck as long as possible in order to view and copy what a fellow candidate has written down for a given question. Fourth, Inscription: Students have now advanced to the level of inscribing materials or information on anything like parts of their body for example thighs, palms, baby pampers; handkerchiefs, rulers, purses, chairs, tables, walls of examination halls and so on. Fifth, Irregular activities inside and outside the examination halls: Students, who have made up their minds to cheat exhibit unwholesome behaviours during the examination. For instance, smuggling out question papers out of the examination hall, sending and receiving information from other candidates or from agents and touts outside the hall, tearing part of the question paper or answer booklet during the examination to perpetrate malpractice. And, Sixth, Bribery. According to the scholars, this form of malpractice may be used to enhance teacher-student collusion to cheat. It brings in the economic perspectives in examination malpractices. A student may pay an examination official some money not necessarily to buy the question paper but to be allowed.

In Kenya (Akaranga & Ongong, 2013; Njue, Muthaa, & Muriungi, 2014), cases of examination malpractices cut across all levels of learning. The malpractices are more prevalent in Chartered Public Universities, with Kenyatta, Nairobi and Moi universities bearing the heaviest brunt. Recent CUE (2016) report on the audit of universities disclosed that in some universities, there were missing marks, delayed completion rates, and unaccountability for students at all levels. The scholars, as well as the CUE report, did not show if cases of examination malpractices in the Kenyan universities influenced students' retention.

Furthermore, the issue of examination malpractices has since become a perennial problem in Kenya. According to Andafu, K'Odhiambo and Gunga (2019), the use of examinations as the yardstick for success and academic progress has propelled teachers, students and schools to engage in a stiff competition in order to excel. Such competition culminates into the use of unfair means by some teachers to attain undue advantage so that their students excel in the national examinations. The perennial nature of the problem has prompted the national examinations body, Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC), to institute a series of measures to combat it. The scholars referred to examination malpractice as any irregular behaviour exhibited by a person in relation to the conduct of examination either before, during or after the examination. Candidates engage in examination malpractices for the purpose of attaining good results. They point to examination malpractice as a deliberate attempt to offer a candidate(s) unfair advantage in examination. When this occurs, the validity of examination and the authenticity of the results become. Akaranga and Ongong, (2013) view examination malpractices as unethical acts which encourage mediocrity in that the students who benefit out of it are unfairly equated to those who struggle on their own to excel. Although examination malpractices

are disruptive to ethical learning in Kenya, there is scarce literature on their influence on students' retention in institutions of learning. This was the focus of this study.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed descriptive research design and both logical positivism, and constructivism philosophical paradigms were employed. This study focused on Chartered Christian Universities, which are located in four counties in Kenya, namely, Nairobi, Kiambu, Machakos and Kericho. The total targeted population was 604 students, 12 Academic Deans (AD), 5 Deans of students (DOS), 5 Finance Managers (FM) and 5 Chaplains. This study employed census sampling procedure to select students. The research instrument employed was a closed-ended questionnaire which was administered to all current year four students. Interviews were carried out with Academic Deans, Deans of students, Finance Managers, and Chaplains in the respective universities studied. Validation was done through monitoring and evaluation by the supervisors and other experts. A pilot study was done on the interview schedule, whereby the researcher administered the interview questions to two university administrators and two academic leaders at Tangaza University. Test-retest reliability method was employed to assess the reliability of the research instrument. The researcher obtained Kabarak University introduction letters which enabled him to seek permission and authority from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovations (NACOSTI) to carry out research. Consent of acceptance was sought from the leadership of the

universities studied. Permission was also sought from the HODs, Deans and other relevant gatekeepers of the universities studied. Quantitative data was examined using SPSS version 22. Embedded Design was employed in the integration and presentation of quantitative and qualitative data outcomes.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The objective of the survey was to show the relationship between instruction cultures and student retention in chartered Christian universities. To answer this objective, the following analysis were performed on the instruction cultures as independent variable; descriptive statistics (means and percentages), and inferential statistics such as Pearson Product Moment correlation and regression analysis was also performed to determine the influence of the religious cultures as independent variable and on students' retention as dependent variable. All the questions were measured in Four Likert scales; 1= Strongly disagree (SD), 2= Disagree (D), 3= Agree (A) and 4= Strongly agree (SA).

Descriptive Statistics for Instruction Cultures (Percentages)

The percentage rating by respondents on the relationship between Instruction cultures and student retention in chartered Christian universities in Kenya is presented in Table 1. The per item percentage rating ranking was based on a four-degree Likert scale comprising of strongly disagree, disagree, agree and strongly agree.

Table 1: Percentage Rating of Instruction Cultures

| Item | SD | D | A | SA | Total |
|--|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|
| High programmes completion rates | 3.7% | 8.0% | 31.8% | 56.4% | 100.0% |
| Clear academic schedules per programme of study. | 4.7% | 9.2% | 29.5% | 56.6% | 100.0% |
| Timely students' support services by the administrative staff. | 7.7% | 13.1% | 35.1% | 44.1% | 100.0% |
| Adequate academic facilities and resources. | 7.5% | 12.9% | 30.8% | 48.8% | 100.0% |
| Students are given opportunities to evaluate their lecturers. | 3.6% | 7.7% | 33.8% | 55.0% | 100.0% |
| Prompt feedback on learning assessment | 2.4% | 11.8% | 30.8% | 55.0% | 100.0% |
| Lecturers use variety of teaching styles to engage students | 3.9% | 11.4% | 30.8% | 53.8% | 100.0% |
| Lecturers are punctual in class | 6.2% | 11.4% | 30.5% | 52.0% | 100.0% |
| Lecturers attend class regularly | 2.1% | 7.1% | 28.8% | 62.1% | 100.0% |
| Small class sizes | 13.6% | 23.4% | 26.9% | 36.1% | 100.0% |

Table 1 shows that majority of the respondents agree that instruction cultures influence students' retention in chartered Christian universities in Kenya. Generally, 30.88% and 51.99% of students agree and strongly agree respectfully that instruction cultures influence students' retention, and only 17.14% disagree that instruction cultures influence students' retention. The finding strongly indicates the need for these universities to put more emphasis on instruction cultures in order to enhance retention of the matriculated students until graduation.

From the finding, the instruction cultures which influence students' retention more in chartered Christian universities include Lecturers attend class regularly (62.1%), Clear academic schedules per programme of study (56.6%), High programmes completion rates (56.4%), Students are given opportunities to evaluate their lecturers (55%), Prompt feedback on learning assessment (55%), Lecturers use variety of teaching styles to engage students (53.8),

and Lecturers are punctual in class (52%). These specific instruction cultures appear to influence students' retention more and should, therefore, be cultivated more to reduce the occurrence of students dropping out of studies or transferring to other universities. The finding concurred with Albar and Onye (2016) finding which show that there was increased satisfaction in private universities because lecturer commitment is high in these universities, thus there is prompt feedback on continuous assessment tests in addition to effective lecturer/student engagement.

Other instruction cultures which relate to student retention in chartered Christian universities in Kenya include timely students' support services by the administrative staff (44.1%) and adequate academic facilities and resources (48.8%). Although these cultures influence students' retention equally, their degree of influence is lower than the instruction cultures with more

50% rating. Universities may need to invest more in these cultures in order to enhance their influence.

Also, small class sizes (36.1%) are related to student retention in chartered Christian universities in Kenya. Apparently, 63% of the respondents (26.9% agree, and 36.1% strongly disagree) saw small class sizes to be related to student retention in these universities. The finding was contrary to numerous studies which link small class to effective students' engagement and learning. For example, Koc and Celik (2015) in their findings show that majority of studies in several countries have linked class size to learning outcomes, class control, student engagement, student assessment and students' attitude to learning among others.

Descriptive Statistics for Instruction Cultures (Means)

On the independent variable, the mean and standard deviation was used to test the distribution of the response. The mean value of $\Rightarrow 3.5$ represented SA (Strongly Agree), the mean value of 2.5 to 3.4 represented A (Agree), the mean value of 1.5 to 2.4 represented D (Disagree) and lastly, the mean value of ≤ 1.4 represented SD (Strongly Disagree). When asked to indicate why students continue in their studies to completion in this university regarding instruction cultures, the response indicated all the items were ranked as strongly agreed and agreed. Apparently, there was no item that respondents strongly disagreed or disagreed, as presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Instruction Cultures

| | | N | Mean | SD |
|-------|--|-----|------|-------|
| Q1_B | Small class sizes | 535 | 3.15 | 1.272 |
| Q2_B | Lecturers attend class regularly | 535 | 3.98 | .967 |
| Q3_B | Lecturers are punctual in class | 535 | 3.79 | .990 |
| Q4_B | Lecturers use variety of teaching styles to engage students | 535 | 3.92 | .978 |
| Q5_B | Prompt feedback on learning assessment | 535 | 3.77 | .987 |
| Q6_B | Students are given opportunities to evaluate their lecturers. | 535 | 3.92 | 1.065 |
| Q7_B | Adequate academic facilities and resources. | 535 | 3.58 | 1.209 |
| Q8_B | Timely students' support services by the administrative staff. | 535 | 3.37 | 1.134 |
| Q9_B | Clear academic schedules per programme of study. | 535 | 3.71 | 1.064 |
| Q10_B | High programmes completion rates | 535 | 3.74 | 1.024 |

As shown in Table 2, instruction cultures which influence students retention most in chartered Christian universities are: Lecturers attend class regularly (M=3.98, SD=.967),

Lecturers use variety of teaching styles to engage students (M=3.92, SD=.978), Students are given opportunities to evaluate their lecturers (M=3.92, SD=1.065), lecturers are

punctual in class ($M=3.79$, $SD=.990$), prompt feedback on learning assessment ($M=3.77$, $SD=.987$), high programmes completion rates ($M=3.74$, $SD=1.024$), clear academic schedules per programme of study ($M=3.71$, $SD=1.064$), and adequate academic facilities and resources ($M=3.58$, $SD=1.209$).

The findings further show that timely students' support services by the administrative staff ($M= 3.37$, $SD=1.134$), and small class sizes ($M=3.15$, $SD=1.272$) influence students' retention at a slightly lower scale by virtue of being ranked agreed. However, by being ranked agreed, it shows they equally exert influence on students' retention in these universities but not at the same level as the items ranked strongly agreed by the respondents.

It is apparent from the finding that instruction cultures play a crucial role in students' retention in chartered Christian universities in Kenya. The finding corroborates well with earlier research findings. A study by Olson and Reece (2015) on student engagement noted its necessity in helping students to gain skills and knowledge to succeed in post-secondary programmes and future careers. They looked at student engagement as holistic because it goes beyond teaching styles and approaches only. As the finding shows, effective students' engagement, therefore, contributes to students' decision to continue with their studies until completion. In addition, as the findings show, the teachers' role with respect to regular attendance to class, punctuality in class, prompt feedback on students' assessment among others are crucial in the overall student engagement and students' retention process.

Concerning students' assessment feedback which is among the items ranked strongly agreed by the respondents, Evans (2013) associate it with students' satisfaction and places it at the heart of the instruction processes and therefore an integral part of a conducive and effective

academic environment. Referring to numerous other studies, she posits that students' assessment feedback as key to students' retention and overall completion of the study. In addition, on completion of studies which respondents considered key to retention, Albar and Onye (2016) observe that, in contrast to public universities, completion rates in private universities was higher because lecturers are committed to teaching and there is little disruption of studies. This, therefore, implies that due to relative stability compared to public universities, there are not only higher completion rates in private universities but higher retention as well.

This study also shows that class sizes do play a key role in students' retention. This is supported by the numerous studies which positively link small class sizes to students' retention. A study by Koc and Celik (2015) show that a plethora of studies in several countries have linked class size to learning outcomes, class control, student engagement, student assessment and students' attitude to learning among others. Other studies have also strongly pointed to the role of class sizes on students' retention. For example, Schwartz, Schmitt, and Lose (2012) relate small class size to the effective teaching of students with special needs. In the UK, Court (2012) argue that student-staff ratio was being used as a key measure in the provision of higher education and was thus considered key to accreditation of institutions of higher learning due to inherent implications on quality education. By being ranked the lowest at the level of agreed, respondents acknowledged the influence of class sizes on students' retention but viewed it the least in influence compared to the other items.

Test of Significant Relationship between Instruction Cultures and Student Retention

In testing the significance of the relationship between Instruction Cultures and Students' Retention in Chartered Christian Universities in Kenya, Pearson correlation was

tested at 0.05 Alpha Level. The finding is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Relationship between Instruction Cultures and Students' Retention in Chartered Christian Universities in Kenya

| | | Instruction Cultures |
|--|---------------------|----------------------|
| Students' Retention in Chartered Christian Universities in Kenya | Pearson Correlation | .482** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 |
| | N | 535 |
| **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). | | |

It was noted that there exists a statistically significant relationship between Instruction Cultures and Students' Retention in Chartered Christian Universities in Kenya ($r=0.482$; $p=0.000$). Coefficient values in Pearson correlation can range from +1 to -1, where +1 points to a perfect positive relationship, -1 indicates a perfect negative relationship, and a 0 indicates no relationship exists. The p-value approach to hypothesis testing, on the other hand,

uses the calculated probability to show whether there is evidence to rule out the null hypothesis (Beers, 2019). A p-value of less than 0.05 rejects the null hypothesis. The positive correlation in this study implies that as Instruction Cultures is upheld, Retention in Chartered Christian Universities in Kenya also increases. This includes prompt feedback on learning assessment, adequate academic facilities and resources, timely students' support services by the administrative staff and High programmes completion rates which significantly influence students' retention in Chartered Christian Universities in Kenya. In a similar study, Burgess (2014) found significant relationship ($r=0.060$, $p=.05$) between empowerment and resistance to change. There was thus a significant association measured between empowerment and Resistance to change ($r = -.132$, $p = .05$). The study noted that as empowerment increased, resistance to change diminished.

Test of Significant Differences in Instruction Cultures among Universities

One-way ANOVA was computed in order to test whether Instruction Cultures among the five Universities was significantly different at 0.05 Alpha Level. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: ANOVA on Instruction Cultures

| | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|----------------|----------------|-----|-------------|-------|------|
| Between Groups | 1.192 | 4 | .298 | 1.307 | .266 |
| Within Groups | 120.864 | 530 | .228 | | |
| Total | 122.056 | 534 | | | |

The findings showed that Instruction Cultures were not significantly different at 0.05, $F(4,530)=1.307$; $p>0.05$. This implies that Instruction Cultures were perceived to be a shared practice amongst the five universities. Further, the outcome being not significantly different means the outcome of the study can be generalised across chartered Christian universities in Kenya. Carter (2017) in a similar

study using ANOVA for significant differences of five independent variables and dependent variable noted that the outcome was statistically significant ($p < .001$) pairwise association between each of the five independent variables and the dependent variable. The five independent variables thus had a positive, statistically significant effect on education quality.

Predictive Capacity of Instruction Cultures on Student Retention

Regression analysis was done to determine how each of the instruction cultures predict student retention in chartered Christian universities in Kenya. The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Instruction Cultures Coefficients^a

| Model | Unstandardised Coefficients | | t | Sig. |
|--|-----------------------------|------------|-------|------|
| | B | Std. Error | | |
| (Constant) | 1.263 | .164 | 7.693 | .000 |
| Small class sizes | .033 | .022 | 1.498 | .135 |
| Lecturers attend class regularly | -.032 | .038 | -.821 | .412 |
| Lecturers are punctual in class | .050 | .030 | 1.641 | .101 |
| Lecturers use variety of teaching styles to engage students | .031 | .031 | 1.001 | .317 |
| Prompt feedback on learning assessment | .127 | .033 | 3.902 | .000 |
| Students are given opportunities to evaluate their lecturers. | .030 | .032 | .924 | .356 |
| Adequate academic facilities and resources. | .067 | .029 | 2.306 | .022 |
| Timely students' support services by the administrative staff. | .123 | .030 | 4.141 | .000 |
| Clear academic schedules per programme of study. | .046 | .033 | 1.365 | .173 |
| High programmes completion rates | .107 | .035 | 3.058 | .002 |

a. Dependent Variable: Students' Retention in Chartered Christian Universities in Kenya

The regression analysis revealed that prompt feedback on learning assessment ($\beta=0.127$, $t=3.902$, $p<0.05$), adequate academic facilities and resources ($\beta=0.067$, $t=2.306$, $p<0.05$), timely students' support services by the administrative staff ($\beta=0.123$, $t=4.14$, $p<0.05$) and High programmes completion rates ($\beta=0.107$, $t=3.058$, $p<0.05$) significantly influence students' retention in Chartered Christian Universities in Kenya. Timely students' support services by the administrative staff have the greatest influence on students' retention in Chartered Christian Universities in Kenya by 12.3%. Adequate academic facilities and resources influences on students' retention

in Chartered Christian Universities in Kenya have the least significant influence by 6.7%. The finding concurred with Albar and Onye (2016) finding which show that there was increased satisfaction in private universities because lecturer commitment is high in these universities, thus resulting in prompt feedback on assessment.

On the other hand, Instruction Cultures variables that influence students' retention in Chartered Christian Universities in Kenya non-significantly include Small class sizes, Lecturers attend class regularly, Lecturers are punctual in class, Lecturers use variety of teaching styles to

engage students, Students are given opportunities to evaluate their lecturers and Clear academic schedules per programme of study ($p > 0.05$). The regression results based on the p-value show the influence of these cultures to be non-significant.

Qualitative Data Outcome on the Influence of Instruction Cultures on Students' Retention

The interview schedules on the relationship between instruction cultures and student retention in chartered Christian universities in Kenya targeted eight academic deans (deans of schools/faculty) hereby referred to as R5, R6, R7, R8, R9, R10, R11, and R12. The guiding questions for the interview sessions were drawn from the students' questionnaire, which had ten items, meaning the interview theme was predetermined by the research objective and the items in the students' questionnaire. The analysis of the interview data was based on the respondents' answers to the questions posed to them as per the ten items in the students' questionnaire. The findings from the analysis of the interview data are as follows.

The first item, small class sizes, received varying responses from the respondents. While some respondents (R5, R7, R9, R11 and R12) agreed that small class sizes influence students' retention, others (R6 and R8) did not agree. One respondent, R10, took a neutral position with the argument that it *"may or may not influence retention because if the classes are too small, it can discourage students"*. Those who agreed noted that small class sizes help teachers to relate with students at a personal level enhances higher student engagement and increases students' performance. R5, for example, captured the perspectives of the respondents who agreed when she said, *"yes, small class sizes help us to relate with students at a personal level. It encourages interaction in class and increases performance"*. For the two respondents who disagreed, their perspective was that the effectiveness of small class sizes was dependent on quality

engagement, otherwise, students might get discouraged. For example, R8 said, *"No, smaller than normal size classes can discourage students"*.

For items two (Lecturers attend class regularly), three (Lecturers are punctual in class), four (Lecturers use variety of teaching styles to involve students), and five (Prompt feedbacks on learning assessment) which are all teacher-based instruction cultures, all the respondents were in agreement that they are key to students' retention. For example, on lecturers attend class regularly, R1 said, *"Yes, it is key to students' retention because students will feel their time of study is not wasted"* and on class punctuality, R3 observed that *"Yes, because time is money. If you come late, you will not give quality information to students because you will be rushing to finish what you had planned to teach"*. On the use variety of teaching styles to engage students by lecturers, R6 said, *"Yes, because there is evidence that students are happy with teachers who use a variety of teaching styles"*. Finally, on Prompt feedbacks on learning assessment, R8 noted, *"Yes, because students get to know their weakness and strength, which in the end will improve their performance"*. In summary, respondents attached the role of the teacher with regards to the four items (Lecturers attend class regularly, Lecturers are punctual in class, Lecturers use a variety of teaching styles to engage students and Prompt feedback on learning assessment) to quality learning, accountability, enhanced teaching/learning process and increased academic performance.

Regarding the question on whether opportunities given to students to evaluate their lecturers influence their retention, all the respondents were in agreement but added that there was a challenge associated with giving feedback to students based on their evaluation. For example, R1 observed, *"Yes, students' evaluation of lecturers makes them confident of their role in the learning process if they receive feedback on their evaluation"* which

was echoed by R5 who said, “Yes, when action is taken on what students have evaluated, makes students happy and retained”. From the foregoing, it is plain that the opportunity accorded to students to evaluate their lecturers may influence students' retention if they receive feedback on the issues they raise in the evaluation.

Concerning adequate academic facilities and resources, timely students' support services by the administrative staff and clear academic schedules per programme of study, all the respondents agreed that they play a critical role in students' retention. First, on academic facilities, most of the respondents argued that they play a key role in attracting and retaining students. Respondent 1 said “yes, because academic facilities and resources represent the image of the university in comparison with other universities” while respondent 4 said, “Yes, if students get what they want, they will be retained”. Respondent 8 added, “Yes, because it motivates students to learn”. Second, on timely students' support services by the administrative staff, all the respondents observed that it gives students a sense of belonging, appreciation and

acceptance, which in turn influence their retention. For example, Respondent 5 said, “Yes, immediate response to students' enquiries makes them feel wanted hence resulting in satisfaction”. Finally, on clear academic schedules per programme of study, the respondents argued that it helps students have a clear roadmap until completion. Respondent 7, for example, said: “Yes, it gives them a clear roadmap and can plan for them because they know what will happen next”.

With respect to high programmes completion rates, all the respondents agreed that they influence students' retention. Some of the reasons they gave are that high completion rates motivate continuing students to stay, enhances institutional loyalty and commitment, and encourages prospective students to join the institution. Respondent 1, for example, said, “Yes, it increases students' institutional loyalty and commitment” while Respondent 5 added, “Yes, because it motivates others who are behind to stay” meaning high completion rates is key to students' retention in chartered Christian universities in Kenya.

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