

ABSTRACT

Shrinking resources from the exchequer, the demand for a more cost-effective education and competition among Universities for students have recently motivated academic administrators in public universities to adopt strategic marketing approaches to enable them to survive. Successful institutions are defining market niches within un-served or under-served populations and are using innovative strategies that capitalize on new opportunities (Mowen and Parks, 1997). Because traditional strategies such as reliance on on-campus mode of offering educational services are not in themselves sufficient for educational institutions to survive into the 21st century, many academic administrators are creating new visions for their institutions and programmes. For instance, In Kenya, five public universities and nine tertiary level institutions have launched distance education programmes to provide quality education to mature working adults who have the keenness and ability to continue their education by studying in their own time and place with far-reaching social and economic benefits. As distance education becomes more accepted as a legitimate form of education and as colleges and universities attempt to meet the growing demand for courses and programmes for distance learners, one major concern is the aspect of quality and the assurance that students are being provided with the best possible education or training with the highest possible standards. The quality of distance education varies like any other form of education. Its

28

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quality can be the result of a variety of factors that are either internal or external to distance education organizations. Some of these factors include the levels of skills and expertise of staff, the amount of resources available, weak or strong leadership, and efficiency of its administration systems or the communication infrastructure in a country. The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between perceived tangibles dimension of a degree programme and its growth. Further, the study sought to establish the relationship between the perceived responsiveness dimension and growth of Distance Education Programme. A self-administered questionnaire was employed to collect data from students, Distance Education administrators and lecturers. The sample consisted of 327 students, two administrators and 92 lecturers. The findings showed that there was no significant relationship between the two quality dimensions and the growth of Distance Education Programme. Based on these findings, it was recommended that managers of DE programmes should not take increased student enrolments as evidence of quality of a programme as this can happen even when there is insufficient learning materials, physical facilities and teaching aids. However, there is need to have sufficient support staff and lecturers. Similarly, the course objectives should be clear, programme should be made as flexible as possible and there should be responsible support staff in order to ensure growth of Distance Education Programme