

Essential Criteria for Measuring Performance of the Universities in Somalia: A Thematic Analysis

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ABSTRACT

According to the Ministry of Education, there are 127 registered universities in Somalia. Currently, Somali citizens have access to universities, but the quality performance of the universities is questionable. In 2019, the Somali government has appointed higher education commission to accredit universities that meet the minimum academic standard. In 2021 the commission announced 41 universities passed the preliminary phase of the assessment.

Many universities have questioned the approach and the tools used in the assessment. The absence of local context performance measurement partially contributed failure to pass accreditation assessment. Therefore, this study proposes criteria that are coherent and general enough to handle a wide variety of performance measurements.

The development of the criteria variables has adapted to the components of day-to-day activities and basic needs for performance

assessment for the universities. Thus, universities may not need to adopt other performance assessment criteria such as ISO and MBNQA which functions in a highly rationalized and technical environment.

Objective: The present research aims to provide criteria and sub-criteria better suited to measure the performance of universities in Somalia.

Method: The researcher interviewed academicians (lecturers) and administrative staff (top management) of universities in Somalia to solicit criteria and sub-criteria.

Sample: A total of 30 respondents representing 20 universities were targeted. By professions 12 were administrative and 18 were academicians. Respondents represented universities in Somalia.

Findings: A total of 32 Themes were found from the respondents. Themes were clustered and categorized into 9 main criteria and 23 sub-criteria. The decision for selecting a theme to be main criteria or sub-criteria is

based on the frequency of its occurrence during the interviews

Introduction

The higher education sector contributes to economic growth, social development, nation-building and stability to any society. According to the Ministry of Education of Somalia, there are 127 registered universities, these universities offer degree and master programs in many disciplines. With this regard, Somali citizens have access to higher education, but the quality performance of the universities is questionable.

In 2019 Somali government has appointed higher education commission to accredit universities that meet the minimum academic standard.

Somali universities are lacking essential criteria for performance measurement however, universities have tried to adopt performance measurement models such as ISO as a guideline but failed to apply.

Criteria built on ISO and other performance measurement models deal with social phenomena in developed countries which are different from the Somali context.

Due to fundamental differences, developed countries' criteria may not be fully applicable to Somali universities. Therefore, Somali

universities need to get criteria and sub-criteria derived from their context.

Literature Review

The process of measuring performance is not a single unit with a single category, but an interdisciplinary subject that touches all the boundaries related to academic disciplines. Matthews (2015) notes that if it is required to measure the performance it has to evaluate different categories including “operations management, strategic management, and organizational behavior”.

Several performance measurement tools are used to assess the quality of education, choosing the appropriate tool for performance measurement has positive contributions to the quality improvement of the university; it also reflects the capacity of the university to carry out its work.

Countries develop excellence models because they want to improve the quality of their products and services (Del Mar, 2011). Quality awards and excellence models like the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award (MBNQA) were launched to improve the performance of American companies and universities (Khampirat 2009, & Islam, 2007).

The advantages of performance measurement

are to know whether progress is being made towards desired goals, whether appropriate actions are being undertaken to achieve these aims, and identifying the problem areas that need attention (Bobe and Kober 2015).

The performance is measured differently depending on the country's context (Abukari and Corner, 2010). UK higher education popularly uses EFQM tool for the purpose of self-assessment and improvement. Similarly, Spanish universities have applied constructs of the EFQM model (Calvo-Mora et al., 2006, Cullen et al., 2003).

Meng and Minogue (2011) indicate that when institutions want to measure their performance, it is important to select the appropriate model applicable to their circumstance. Institutions should test a variety of performance measurement models and select the one applicable to their circumstances to achieve the organizational goals (Bourne et al., 2013).

Methodology

The primary objective of this study is to develop performance measurement criteria applicable to universities in Somalia. This study applied the qualitative method.

Data collection

To obtain criteria and sub-criteria for the study the researcher interviewed university

academicians and decision-makers. Respondents represented all universities in Somalia. A total of 30 respondents representing 20 universities were targeted. The demographic profiles of the respondents were different. 15 from Mogadishu, 5 from Somaliland, 4 from Puntland, 2 from South West, 2 from Jubaland, and 2 from Hirshabele. The respondents' professions also different. 12 were administrative and the other 18 were academicians. Table 1.1 and Table 1.2 provide the demographic and the profile of the interviewed respondents.

Table 1.1: Demographic breakdown for the interviewed respondents

Area	Admin	Academic	Total
Mogadishu	5	10	15
Som. Land	2	3	5
Punt Land	2	2	4
Jubaland	1	1	2
South West	1	1	2
H/Shabele	1	1	2

Table 1.2: Respondents' demographic profile

Item	Frequency	Percent
Gender	25	83
• Male	5	17
• Female		
Highest level of education		
• Bachelors	5	16
• Masters	17	57
• Ph.D.	8	27
Position		
• Dean/ Deputy	7	23

• Head of the department	5	17
• Lecturer	18	60

Data analysis

This research primarily sought to identify the criteria and sub-criteria to measure the performance of universities in Somalia. During the interviews, different themes emerged which seemed focused on performance measurement. Themes were grouped and developed into criteria and sub-criteria. The decision for selecting a theme to be the main criteria or sub-criteria is based on the frequency of its occurrence during the interviews.

Findings of the Interview

Respondents were asked open-ended questions. Different themes emerged during the interviews which focused on performance measurement. Themes were grouped and developed into criteria and sub-criteria.

A total of 32 criteria were found from the respondents (nine main criteria and 23 sub-criteria). The decision for selecting a theme to be the main criteria or sub-criteria is based on the frequency of its occurrence during the interviews. Table 1.3 shows the frequency of the main criteria and their occurrence. Table 1.4 indicates a list of performance criteria and sub-criteria generated by the respondents.

Table 1.3: Themes and number of occurrences

#	Themes	Number of occurrence
1	Curriculum	25
2	Faculty and Staff Recruitment	22
3	Campus Facility	21
4	Technology	18
5	Students' Focus	16
6	Work Processes	12
7	Leadership	11
8	Strategic Planning	10
9	Result	9

As shown Table 1.3, respondents' perceptions about themes are not equally important.

Table 1.4 List of performance criteria and sub-criteria generated by the respondents

#	Criteria	Sub-criteria
1	Curriculum (C1)	Updated Curriculum (C1.1) Original Text Books & Credit hours (C1.2)
2	Faculty and Staff Recruitment (C2)	Academic Qualification (C2.1) Working Experience (C2.2) Staff Recruitment Process (C2.3)
3	Campus Facility (C3)	Learning Materials (C3.1) Infrastructure (C3.2)
4	Technology (C4)	Internet (C4.1) Digital library (C4.2)
5	Students' Focus (C6)	Teacher-student ratios (C6.1) Students' satisfaction (C6.2) Students' dropout (C6.3)
6	Work Processes (C5)	Academic work process (C5.1) Administrative work process (C5.2)
7	Leadership (C7)	Senior Leadership (C7.1) Corporate Social Responsibility (C7.2)
8	Strategic Planning (C8)	Strategic Development (C8.1) Strategic Implementation (C8.2)
9	Results (C9)	Academic Performance Result (C9.1) Student Employability Result (C9.2) Research and Publication Result (C9.3) Faculty and Staff Wellbeing Result (C9.4) Student Satisfaction Result (C9.5)

The following section discusses the nine identical themes obtained from the respondents.

Curriculum

The curriculum sets the direction for student learning and provides guidance whatever is going to be taught in the university at a given time in a given year. The aim is to teach a broad and balanced curriculum that meets the educational needs of students and the nation. The statements below are the respondents' views on curriculum:

If the curriculum is strong, it enables student to be a successful learner, a confident individual, a responsible citizen and an effective contributor.

Universities should develop their own curriculum which meets the local demand. The challenge is curriculum adopt universities are not relevant the circumstance in our country.

The main challenges face Somali higher education as outdated curriculum; students are taught first addition text books.

During the interviews, respondents were focused on two sub-themes under curriculum namely Updated curriculum, original text books and credit hours.

Updated Curriculum

Like other business industries, universities are expected to produce better quality graduates and universities need to pay much attention to the quality of what they teach. The goal of an updated curriculum is to increase teaching quality. The statements below are respondents' views on updated curriculum:

Text books use in some universities are those published in the 1980s. Some lecturers are very conservative; they want to use text book edition/version they were taught.

To develop our own curriculum, really needs to hire a lot of expertise and currently universities don't have budget. The universities adopt other curriculum.

Original Text Books and Credit hours

Universities in Somalia have the challenge of having original text books. They use the same text books for many years and some universities rely solely on one original book. The statements below are respondents' views on books & credit hours:

Universities should have connections with well-known publishers to get original text-books, e.g, Medicine students are not suitable to use copied books (Black and white)

A course with three credit hours is allocated to teach one and half hours to save cost. This will have an impact on the student and university performance.

Faculty and Staff Recruitment

Faculty and staff recruitment had the second-highest number of frequencies. Both academicians and administrators were equally concerned with this theme. Faculty and staff play a vital role in university performance. Any challenge from faculty and staff underlies the university's ability to deliver the necessary knowledge and skills to its students.

Qualified faculty do not only stand to teach, they contribute to the external image of the university by publishing and attending international conferences. Views of faculty on recruitment are:

Universities should recruit qualified lecturers for each course. Not to accept one lecturer to teach several different courses for which he/she is not qualified.

There is a shortage of qualified lecturers. The challenge is that Ph.D. holders are reluctant to teach and prefer administrative positions or to work with companies.

In the case of faculty and staff recruitment, respondents expressed other concerns related to the theme. After clustering the theme, the researcher found three sub-categories namely (Staff Recruitment Process, Academic Qualification, and Working Experience)

Staff Recruitment Process

Universities are often criticized for their shoddy recruitment process. Here are the academicians' views on staff recruitment process.

Most universities are private owned universities. The owner decides who should be employed regardless of qualification.

Top management brings the candidate without the proper process and the human resource department is dictated to employ that candidate.

Candidates have more confidence to link with someone else rather than through direct application. I can say the challenge also comes from the candidates

The recruitment process enables universities to get better qualified candidates and this will result in producing quality graduates. A university dean stated:

Let everyone go through the recruitment process. We only hire the qualified candidates.

Academic Qualification

Brain-drain is a challenge for universities in Somalia. Highly qualified academicians prefer to work in developed countries or to work with international organizations such UN agencies in Somalia who pays higher.

Most of the university lecturers have a master degree. PhD. holders are a smaller in percentage compared with master's degree

holders. Below statements are deans' view on qualifications

Bachelor holders are not a competitor any more in the academic field. Academicians should have a minimum of a master's degree

For the time being, we don't recommend to consider titles such as Prof., Associate prof., or assistant prof. let us focus on qualifications, such as master and Ph.D.

Universities are not only seeking to employ highly qualified academicians, but banks, ministries, UN agencies and are also interested to hire qualified academicians.

Hiring qualified academicians represents the performance level of the university. It is necessary that a university has a good number of Ph.D. lecturers

Working Experience (Trained)

There are many benefits in recruiting professional experienced/trained personnel. Deans' views on working experience in the recruitment process the following:

Our university realizes recruiting experienced staff can achieve high academic standards. But the challenge is affordability of salary and availability.

To attract experienced staff and faculty, the university should have motivation factors such as promotions, higher payments, and other bonuses

Experienced lecturers are able to make a course interesting and easy. The recruitment of an experienced workforce improves university performance.

Campus Facility

Campus facilities caught the attention of both academicians and administrative staff. Respondents believed that campus facilities contribute to students' expectations and add value regarding the ability to deliver the necessary knowledge and skills. In general, the availability of the required facilities on the campus reflects the performance of the university.

Most importantly, respondents argued that campus facility simplifies the teaching and learning process, and reflects the quality of the educational institution.

The following views are highlighted by an academician regarding campus facilities in the sampled universities.

If the learning environment is not conducive and campus facilities are not complete, it greatly reflects the students' performance and the credibility of the university.

Universities do not get support from the government and tuition fees are not enough. Therefore, it's very difficult to acquire full campus facilities.

Currently, Somali higher education is becoming much more competitive than before, to remain competitive universities need to have better campus facilities.

During the interview, respondents expressed different issues under the campus facility theme. The researcher clustered the views on campus facilities and obtained two sub-

themes namely, Infrastructure, Teaching-Learning Materials.

Infrastructure

The interviewed respondents believed that infrastructure plays an important role in universities' performance. With regard to the respondents' views, infrastructure is divided into three; admin building or rectory building, where university administrators operate day-to-day activities, and the academic building where teaching and learning take place (lecture halls, library, computer labs, and laboratories are located). Below is a comment by an academician and head of department.

The infrastructure concern is an outstanding issue; students increasingly demand campus facilities similar to those in other countries.

Our universities' campus infrastructure does not meet world standards. The gap does exist and this is a challenge.

We recognize the demand for modern campus infrastructure. We bought land but we have the challenge of security.

Teaching and Learning Materials

The quality of teaching and learning materials may vary from one university to another. During the interview, respondents expressed their concerns over the quality and quantity of available materials for teaching and learning purposes.

The following statements are articulated by both academicians and administrators on teaching and learning materials:

I admit that there is a shortage of teaching materials in our universities. As a lecturer, you cannot get full teaching facilities in the class room to enhance your teaching.

Teaching and learning facilities are important, “Each class should have a desktop computer, projector, big whiteboard, internet access, and air-conditioning” but university classes are not fully equipped.

Technology

Traditional teaching and learning tools have changed due to modern technology. For instance, whiteboards have been changed to smart boards and physical libraries have changed to e-libraries. The statement below is the respondent’s view on technology:

We are in the modern era universities should use more technology to enhance teaching and also attract more students.

The pressure to use technology for teaching is increasing. The statements below are a dean’s and lecturer’s view on technology and young lecturers.

When technology is applied in teaching and learning, students learn more in less time.

The challenge is that the university cannot get the latest technology and the lecturers want to use technology for their teaching in order to enhance their performance.

During the interview session, respondents talked about two other issues related to the challenge of technology; internet and digital library and both were considered sub-themes.

Internet

University students use the internet for many purposes. These include as a tool for learning and open-access cluster rooms. University internet also establishes a social connection between the university and students. Below are the respondents’ views on the internet:

Lack of high speed internet facility lowers research activities and the quality of our education. Lecturers and students use mobile data which is not enough to download files.

University campus should have high speed internet for video conferencing. Lecturers prefer to download articles and/or video conferencing without leaving the classroom.

Digital Library

Accessibility of digital library can offer greater opportunities for both university and users. Academicians would be able to publish articles and students would be able to write quality theses.

Getting a digital library can easily help students to write their literature on quality journals.

The challenge of a lack of digital library is that the lecturers are unable to identify plagiarized and duplicated studies.

Work Processes

The university work process involves a series of steps or actions from its workforce. The university seeks to evaluate past performance and predict future outcomes to improve the work process. The below statement is a lecturer's view on work process

Basically the work process is a range of administrative tasks in the university. Failing to manage will lead to breaking up the institution.

University should have rules and regulations; lecturer & student attendance should keep regularly.

According to the respondents, work process was classified into administrative work process and academic work process.

Administrative Work Process

The administration is required to work closely with the academic staff who delivers the program(s) to enhance and create a high quality learning environment. Administrative work process includes the allocation and monitoring of teaching workloads, staff development, and to conduct meetings focus on performance and development review. The statements are a lecturer's views on work process:

Universities are increasingly facing competition. The administration should conduct a regular evaluation on work process.

Academic Work Process

Academic work process is one of the principal features of the university. It is an obligation to the university; teaching students using appropriate instruction methods such as lectures, seminars and other formal academic work and to mark and assess students work, and to invigilate. Furthermore, to supervise students' thesis on higher degree research. The statement below is a respondent's views on academic work process:

Academic work needs commitment, lectures' attendance is very important and be prepared (lesson plan).

Lecturers should be given rooms or any other space to prepare lessons or mark exams. Lecturers should also get assistance for exam invigilation.

Student Focus

Most respondents have emphasized on student focus. Almost all universities rely on tuition fees from the students. Failure to focus on students results in students to join other universities and that is not the interest of the university. During the interviews respondents mentioned the issues of student satisfaction, teacher-student ratio, and student dropout. Thus, the researcher considered it sub-themes.

Student Satisfaction

Over time education demands are changing, student requirements are also changing. For students, teaching and learning alone are not enough. University students are mature. If they are not satisfied, they will leave the university and this will affect the university's reputation and the revenue.

Student satisfaction is very important. Some students compare competing university's performance and their university. Sometimes they compare international universities.

Universities should have suggestion box which student can submit his/her claim in written format.

Teacher-student Ratio

The teacher-student ratio is a measure of number of lecturing staff at the university in relation to how many students. The ratio is calculated by dividing the number of students by the number of academicians. The statement below is a respondent's views on teacher-student ratio:

There is a shortage of qualified academicians. Every year new students are enrolled and no new academicians are hired.

University wants to teach 150 students in one class. The issue of teacher-student ratio need to consider here in Somalia.

Student Dropout

Students dropping out are a common phenomenon in many universities in Somalia, but there are differences in the percentage and the reasons for dropping out. Universities need to do perform better for retaining students. The statement below is a respondent's views on major reasons for student dropouts:

Students' dropout has an impact on graduation rates. Classes may start with a huge number of students and only a few students graduate. more than half of the students' dropout.

Student mobility is very high among universities.

Students leave universities to join market labor or crazy about going to overseas.

Leadership

The success or failure of a university depends to a great extent on its leadership. University senior leadership is expected to practice a governance system and to create an innovative environment for high performance to manage and overcome challenges. The below statements are respondents' views on leadership:

When university leadership is good, everything else is good and vice-verse.

When leadership is committed, I am sure, the chance for better performance is high, and I can say 95% can make improvement.

During the interview, respondents mentioned themes related to leadership such as senior leadership and corporate social responsibility, recognized it as sub-themes

Senior Leadership

A university's senior leadership has the primary role to manage the day-to-day operations of the university. Senior leaders' responsibility extends to all functions of management. They plan, manage, organize, and monitor the use of the human, financial and physical resources that are allocated to the university. Below are the lecturers' responses on senior leadership.

It is necessary for senior leadership to have a policy for achievement recognition and motivating the lecturer and staff performance.

Somali universities are mostly owned by the senior leaders; therefore, senior leadership accountability is lower.

Corporate Social Responsibility

Leaders are not only expected to contribute to the institutions they lead, they are also expected to contribute to the community they work under. Corporate social responsibility is a requirement of quality and a component in university rankings. Universities must work with the corporate social responsibility unit (CSR) which deals with matters related to

communities. Below is a statement of one deans on the CSR unit:

Based on case by case, we do contribute to the community when it is necessary, but we don't have a specific unit/office for corporate social responsibility (CSR).

We ask our students to teach community schools in rural areas.

Our final year students offer health facilities to IDPs to contribute to the communities

Strategic Planning

Strategic planning helps universities set strategic objectives, action plans, implementations, to measure the progress and to make changes in circumstances. The below statements are from a deputy dean and head of department

Universities should have a strategic plan and should reevaluate year after year. External factors may influence predetermined strategy

During the interviews, few respondents mentioned strategic development and strategic implementation as a challenge in universities. The researcher recognized these two themes as sub-themes

Strategic Development

A key step for strategic development is the participation of academicians and staff. This is intended to ensure that all staff members have an understanding of the standards they are expected to meet in order to plan and

advance their careers. The statement below is a lecturer's view on strategic development:

The university develops its strategy, but the challenge is academicians are not invited to be part of strategy development.

Strategic Implementation

A university's strategic implementation must be considered holistic and it is necessary to have tools and the techniques that support that strategy implementation process. These include, identifying implementers and agreeing an acceptable timeframe and assessment outcome.

Strategy implementation should aim to produce capable graduates contributing to the demands of professional challenges in the country and in particular to the labour market.

University strategic implementation should not only write in a paper: - it should implement with sufficient care.

Conclusion

The pressure of performance measurement effects every university in the world. However, universities in Somalia are unlikely to meet the requirement of advanced models because the socio-political situations in Somalia differ from developed countries. Therefore, it becomes necessary to develop criteria applicable to their status. Research findings indicate that curriculum, faculty recruitment and work process are frail among

universities in Somalia. The absence of performance measurement model in Somalia reflects the quality of education in the country. The developed criteria are not just limited to one university but applies to evaluate all universities in Somalia, and it can be used as: -

- Self-assessment tool to measure the performance
- As a guideline move towards performance excellence
- Assist institutions to measure their progress towards achieving quality practices
- Improve quality education and lead the change

Finally, applying these criteria and sub-criteria to Somali universities will not only help to pass the commission assessment but will give chance to be ranked top universities in the country.

About SRA

Somali Researchers Association (SRA) is an association that brings together Somali researchers and provides a platform to exchange knowledge, experience, and ideas. SRA founded in 2017, it's a professional association whose mission is to promote excellent research in Somalia.

Our research creates awareness about the public problems in people's life provides actionable intelligence to civic leaders and policy-makers, reorients the focus towards the solutions, and paves the way for real change in a way that builds momentum for a better tomorrow for all and delivers its information free of charge This article is for information purposes only. The author has no position in any institution mentioned in this article. The author has not received compensation for writing this article.

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