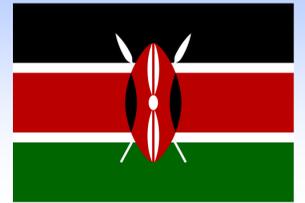


Challenges faced by Deans and Heads of Departments in Kenyan Public Universities

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Introduction

The Dean of a school or Faculty has a significant impact on the University's intellectual life and academic future through hiring decisions, faculty support, and strategic initiative. The Dean serves as the school's advocate within the University. Criteria for appointment of a dean varies from country to country and even from one university to another and it could be by: election, direct appointment and competitive interview and qualified to the rank of senior lecturer and above with leadership qualities. Deans are, in essence, classic middle managers: with enormous responsibilities, despite little positional power, insufficient resources and limited authority. This places them in a challenging situation that requires focus and charisma. Deans of school of nursing in universities in developing countries of Sub-Saharan Africa are faced with leadership challenges and shortage of resources both physical and human which affects how they deliver their mandate of leading the school or faculty. This situation affects them as employees who wish to provide ethical accountable servant leadership that fulfils their moral and ethical desire as professionals. As a result lecturers, students, and graduates of such institutions are affected, which will be demonstrated in services they provide after graduation. Some Deans are appointed into leadership positions in a school of nursing after having been in academics for a few years or sometimes months. However, such individuals are not provided with mentorship or training on the role of a dean of a school or faculty (Bouws et al. 2016). Effective leadership in any organization is a crucial component of overall organization success. The effective leadership of academic departments and schools is a crucial issue for policy makers, leaders and University staff because it is a critical factor in sustaining and improving the quality and performance. As such there is need to discuss and conduct research on challenges that are faced by Deans and Heads of Departments in Universities in Kenya.

Objectives

1. Define the role of a dean of school and head of an academic department.
2. Describe experience or challenges faced by heads of department and Deans of schools in Universities in Kenya.
3. Make a call to global nurses and faculty to come together to work with those in the developing countries and those in developed countries to develop tools that can be used to support nurse leaders in their leadership roles.

Research Questions

1. What challenges do Deans and heads of departments face in performing their roles?
2. What are the challenges faced by heads of department and deans in performing their roles
3. What role can global nurses and faculty play to support deans and heads of department in developing countries to perform their role?

Methods

Hypothesis: Global nurses and faculty can make significant contribution towards improving education leadership in Kenya and other developing countries.
Research design: Qualitative descriptive methods will be used to collect and analyze data.
Population: Deans and heads of departments from the sampled schools.
Sampling and sample size: All heads departments and deans working in the sampled schools.
Data Collection Methods and analysis: In-depth interviews will be used to collect data from all those who will participate in the study.
Results: Findings of the study will be used to develop tools and materials to support heads of department and deans of schools of nursing within universities.
Unique contribution: A contribution to nursing education leadership in Kenya and other developing countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, improved university leadership and a major contribution to the world at large will be realized.

Expected Results

The findings of the proposed study might reveal what the Deans perceive as their role in the leadership of University and what the reality about their experiences is. The results will provide a reality picture of the kind of work environment the deans work in probably revealing the lack of mentorship situation, a difficult workplace environment, stressors of the dean role that are specific to nursing, and a variety of personal and professional sacrifices a dean makes on a daily basis.

In addition, the unique situation of a dean of nursing and the challenges that arise from dealing with her role within the University and negotiating with external agents such as hospitals and health care centers which provide clinical experiences for the students in the school might be revealed.

The findings will also reveal the leadership training needs of the deans and how to manage the resultant stress from the role. Bouws et. al. 2016 identified how stressful dean's role can be and how various aspects of the role affect the dean's personal and professional life; and implies that universities must provide deans with continued professional leadership development.

The study might uncover the gender factor in academic leadership because Universities in Kenya are patriarchal, and have made little effort to challenge the cultural norm of gender relationships and therefore lead to discussions and review how appointment and assignment of responsibility of deans are determined.

Conclusions

It is recommended that global nurse leaders and faculty work together and share experiences on transformational leadership and how the experiences from those in developed countries with more resources can be adapted by those nurse leaders from less developed countries where resources are scarce.

Global nurses and faculty should also work with those in the developing countries to develop training tools that can be used to support nurse leaders in their leadership roles. Further, develop leadership training programs that are accessible to those with scarce resources.

Develop collaborative partnerships between nurse leaders from developed and those in developing countries to provide opportunities for continuous development on training, mentorship and evaluation of the role of the dean of schools of nursing in Kenya and globally.

An academic leadership partnership model can therefore be developed and shared between collaborating partners for best practices among those in the position of the dean.

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