

Students' Perceptions of the Administration and Management of Field Courses: The Case of Third Year Students at Moi University, 2015.

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Abstract

Field courses are important areas for bridging lectures to practical lessons in every discipline learnt in colleges and universities. This paper assesses the perceptions of students on the administration and management of the field courses; the case of third year students at Moi university (Bachelor of Arts, PSA 312). It evaluates the administration and management of field courses at Moi University, and attempts to find solutions in relation to challenges therein. The study adopts a descriptive design, mixture of systematic and representative sampling techniques in its methodology. Generally, the study uses both qualitative and quantitative methods to access data, ultimately, the analysis was based on content, themes and output of SPSS information. A sample of 68 students was randomly chosen to participate in the study in 2015. The study findings highlight the imperatives of the need for policy in the administration and management of the field courses and makes recommendations, which Moi University and other institutions of higher learning can use to improve field course administration and management.

Key words: Field Courses, Management, Administration, Student Perceptions

INTRODUCTION

Social scientists consider learning outside the classroom important because society acts like a laboratory for practical experience. Learning in outside environment has makes field courses to be increasingly popular component of curriculum among the courses offered at universities globally. Both students and lecturers find in field courses an opportunity to relate theory and practice and hence appreciate their symbiotic relationships. In a research report on students studying biology, field courses have been described an opportunity to:

Travel, make new friends, and study organisms in a wide range of habitats. You'll learn modern field research techniques, undertake exciting and unique projects, and become skilled in data analysis. The close collaboration between staff and students will present a rare opportunity to immerse yourself in a specialist area of field study that may prepare you for your future career (www.ls.manchester.ac.uk)

Apart from exposing students to practical areas learnt in theory, field courses reinforce informal sessions that boost learning appreciation across student-student and student-lecturer divide. The principal goal of such courses is to train students to develop and recognize a multi-dimensional relationship in their fields of study and often build the sense of final application of

course. In some cases, these courses are organized as inter- university student exchange programmes culminating in joint seminar topical discussions (Source).

Mentioning of field courses ignite in the mind of students a notion of the phrase “field trip” which normally means long bus rides, packed lunches and museum tours. However, field trips can take a variety of forms that meet a variety of needs and can enhance deep, active learning. This, therefore, means they need to be prepared for by the university and college departments, coordinators/course dons, and students going beyond the ‘trip mentality’. Traditionally, there is a thinking that these study trips are only meant for students yet lecturers need them as much. Thus Claiborne Lily et al (2014) on a research on “Teaching outside Classroom” assert that:

Along with the engagement with concepts that is required by these experiences, the student bonding that occurs on field trips enhances the learning experience and creates a learning community as students continue onward in a discipline. Teaching in the field also gives instructors the opportunity to get to know their students in greater depth in terms of how the students see the world differently than the instructor. This insight into student world-views can help the instructor to better communicate the concepts of the course.

A Field course extends learning outside lecture halls and university and probably also inculcate community/public service sense of learning through engagements while on study tour. Due to the importance of field courses, many institutions have designed policies that guide implementation. Clairborne (2014) for instance, suggests that guidelines/policies for field courses should include:

- Setting up the field trip as a research project that includes data collection.
- Conducting a theoretical examination of the issue in class long before going into the field. Students should have a sense of what the field trip is going to be about before they go.
- At least two weeks before heading into the field, develop the rudiments of basic hypotheses. At this point the instructor should give details about the field site so that students know what to expect.
- In the field, focus on the things that you’ve agreed to focus on and let the other stuff be icing on the cake.
- If for a large class, prepare Team Leaders to manage smaller groups of the class.
- Prepare students for practicalities including appropriate attire, expectations for physical exertion, anticipated rest stops, supplies and materials they should bring
- Prepare for transportation, creating a sampling method suitable for students with minimal previous experience, weather, coordination with external personnel, effective use of team leaders (for management of group dynamics), student allergies and fears, and safety.

Problem Analysis

Every year, students in Moi University raise complaints on field courses management. On the other hand, lecturers concerns have often surrounded on the inadequacy and delay of facilitation by university administration before field courses commenced. The issue, especially of facilitation of students during the field courses and logistical related issues make it imperative to carry out this study. The research therefore sought to meet the following objectives:

Objectives of the research

- i. To evaluate the administration and management of field courses in University
- ii. To examine the Moi university policy on the management of field courses
- iii. To establish students' perception of the administration and management of field courses
- iv. To suggest possible solutions to existing challenges on field courses

These objectives were pursued through research questions such as:

Research Questions

- i. How are field courses administered and managed in Moi University?
- ii. What is the policy of Moi University on the management of field courses?
- iii. What are student's perceptions' on the administration and management of field courses?
- iv. What possible solutions exist to ameliorate challenges on field courses?

The research questions guided the review of literature and primary data collection

RELATED LITERATURE

In this section, the researchers by use of the four objectives purpose to find the central role played by administration and management of field courses in universities and colleges. The objectives are used as sub-themes and under each, relevant literature and observations are captured.

Administration and Management of Field Courses: An Evaluation

Different scholars view field courses differently. Mogk, David W. (http://www.minsocam.org/msa/Monographs/Mngrph_03/MG003_047-052.pdf) says; field trips (courses) are commonly the most memorable educational experiences for many students, and serve as excellent mechanisms in the recruitment and retention of students in geology programs. Field trips (courses) provide the opportunity for students to become motivated to learn, and participation on field trips results in measurable impacts on student values (sense of importance), interests, and attitudes (sense of enjoyment) about the subject matter. Field trips help us to experience the joy of working in a natural environment, the excitement of discovery, and the satisfaction engendered by mastery of content and increased appreciation for the methods of scientific investigation. According to Orien (1993), the most important role of field trips in the learning process is in "direct experience with concrete phenomena and materials".

The very nature of field trip (courses) exercises requires students to be active learners, rather than merely covering material in a passive mode in a traditional classroom. Furthermore, experiential activities facilitate the transition from lower-order learning strategies (e.g. memorization of information) to the higher cognitive learning strategies required to master and retain abstract concepts (e.g. MacKenzie and White, 1982; Orien, 1993). Kern and Carpenter (1986) have shown that lower-order learning is virtually identical for all students whether or not they have participated in field experiences. However, they found that field experiences enhanced students' ability to understand, analyze, synthesize, and use acquired information and concepts.

Perhaps the most important aspect of a successful field activity is a clear articulation of the activities, goals, and expected outcomes of the field trip. The instructional goals of a field trip may be: 1) to catalyze, enrich or culminate instructional units, 2) to introduce a new unit of instruction to create interest in the subject or topic, 3) to present a main body of an

instructional unit as a tool to enhance and motivate learning, or 4) to illustrate and reinforce facts, skills, and concepts as a follow-up for class work (paraphrased from Rudman, 1994). Whatever the motivation, field experiences should be integral to the overall course of study, rather than merely used as an enrichment or add-on activity (Orien and Hofstein, 1994).

Rudman (1994) makes the following suggests that, prior to a field trip, leaders should:

- i. Create goals and objectives which justify the purpose of the field trip.
- ii. Implement an introduction or orientation before the field trip departure (e.g., slide show, speaker, discussion on what to expect and how to behave).
- iii. Reduce the environmental novelty for yourself and the students. Make a pre-trip inspection yourself and learn how to use the (available) resources. If time, travel or expenses do not allow for this, phone calls or letters can be just as helpful.
- iv. Select a field trip site that provides hands-on, materials to manipulate. Trip leaders should stimulate interest through questioning, problem solving, exploration and investigation.
- v. Allow students time to experience the excitement of exploration and discovery. Certain behaviors should be expected, but the field trip does not have to be a regimental, single file line of silent students.
- vi. Administer post-field trip materials, projects, or activities to help students reinforce and transfer the learning experience beyond the field trip.

Orien (1993) presents a model for the development and implementation of effective field trips:

- i. The main instructional strategy of the field trip should be hands-on experience, concentrating on those activities that cannot be conducted in the classroom or laboratory.
- ii. A process-oriented approach should be used to achieve the objective of hands-on experience. This approach involves assignments that direct the students towards activities such as: observing, touching, identifying, measuring, and comparing. Follow-up activities of interpretation and drawing conclusions should be based on these basic processes.
- iii. Students should be prepared for the field trip. The more familiar they are with their assignment (cognitive preparation), with the area of the field trip (geographical preparation), and the kind of event in which they will participate (psychological preparation), the more productive the field trip will be for them.
- iv. The field trip should be used as integration with a particular unit because concrete activities in the field provide a basis for meaningful learning.

To assess the effectiveness of the field trip experience, Orien and Hofstein (1994) used the following evaluative mechanisms:

- i. Pre-field trip questionnaires were administered on students' background, attitudes towards field trips, attitudes towards geology and a pre-field trip achievement test was given.
- ii. During the field trip, direct observations were made of student performance, students were interviewed, and students' attitudes towards the field trip were collected via a questionnaire.
- iii. Post-field trip surveys and interviews were conducted to determine students' attitudes towards field trips and geology, and an achievement test was given.

It is necessary to have a basic understanding of students' prior knowledge, interests, attitudes, and pre- or misconceptions to help formulate the field trip activities. During the field trip it is also important to monitor student performance (what they can do and what they know) as well as interest and attitudes to ensure that the field trip is a positive and meaningful experience. Post-field trip activities are also important to help reinforce the lessons learned on the field trip, and to help students reflect on the relevance of the field experience to the rest of their coursework, and to their personal lives.

Policy on Field Courses

Among some universities, field course policies exist. According to University of Missouri (2014), there exists a field trip guide. In their document, when considering a field trip, faculty/staff are advised to first review existing policies and follow those recommended procedures. Before the activity, they are required to have; documented itinerary and description of activities, review and plan for inherent risks associated with activities, review and plan for liabilities, and have emergency plan. The University community is involved in a very diverse range of activities in its Risk Assessment and Emergency Planning (RAEP). Again the Faculty, staff, and students must comply with University policies while on field trips just as they would on campus including those concerning alcohol and drug use, vehicle use, student misconduct, smoking, principles of academic freedom, policy on sexual harassment, and consensual relationships. It is not assumed that all students are in agreement to the field trip hence they must fill in Request to Travel form, must fill Student Sign – up list at appropriate points, fill an Assumption of Risk/ Permission form, and site sponsor contracts for risk responsibility by the university. And finally, the procedures involved in reporting of incidents are documented and known before hand.

Southern Illinois University Carbondale (2007) is the cumulative policy description of field courses for the university. It defines what field trips are and what they are not. It further, provides factors to consider while planning, documentation related to the trips, emergency plans, and it documents special requirements for participation. This institution in addition has a check list that must be adhered to prior to approval of trips. University of Florida's Harn Museum of Art (www.harn.ufl.edu 6/11/2016) have a field trip policy that differs with the previous two discussed above in the sense that it is a biannual based policy. Somehow we could term it a tour/ guest guide operative policy, but still the underlying issues in field trip policies are inherent which makes it a good reference. These makes it prudent to think that many other universities that are operating outside such policies should find it necessary to institute such relevant yardsticks to avoid arbitrary handling of a course of this nature. Most often in Kenyan set ups and Africa at large, we wait till either the concerned commission initiates or the relevant ministry takes lead.

Students' Perceptions on the Administration and Management of Field Courses

In a research by Azhar and Zairi (2015) the perception of Diploma in Electronic Engineering (DKE) students who had attended a trip to Beserah earth satellite station, field trips get positive responses from students. They however noted that to conduct an effective field trip, the management should provide adequate funds and resources for coordination at all levels. As stated earlier, field courses in Moi University were generally considered as educational tours which were not assessed previously. Courses like BSc in Forestry, MSc in Environmental Studies and BA in geography used offered field courses that to support the theory taught in class. Departments and individual course instructors were responsible for the guidelines and delivery of the course. Despite the fact that there is no comprehensive policy on field courses, departments design their own guidelines on ad-hoc basis. During our field

research, students were asked to fill questionnaires on their perceptions on certain aspects of field courses

Table showing Responses on Perception Question

S/No	Response Item	Response Type (D) in Percentage	Response Type (NS) in Percentage	Response Type (A) in Percentage
1.	Course Usefulness	8%	2%	90%
2.	Prior Preparation	95%	3%	2%
3.	Being Involved by Dept.	95%	2%	3%
4.	Adequate Preparation	91%	2%	7%
5.	Payment versus Expectation	98%	-	2%
6.	Enjoyment of trip	5%	3%	92%

Source: Authors, 2016.

Even though students' perception may at times be over board with realities, the good practices after the onset of scientific inventions in the 20th Century calls for understanding the place of the client in organizational decision makings thus we cannot ignore all their perceptions. In this study, after subjecting the students' to the data collection tools, it became clear that the response type "D" attracted higher percentages in most of the questions unlike the response type "NS". On the other hand, the response type "A" had a few high positive percentage rates, an indication of interest in this course. In relation to the policy statements stated as in Southern Illinois University Carbondale (SIUC) and University of Missouri, some of the responses we received in this study as weak points seem to corroborate with the lack of guiding policies for field courses. It has been said by some that knowing a problem is half the solution to a problem. This is a truistic statement in several senses since without identifying a problem it can be hard to think of a viable attempt to solving it

METHODOLOGY

The study is a qualitative research which adopted a descriptive Qualitative Action Research. Questionnaires were used to collect data, after which descriptive data analysis technique was used in data analysis. Students who undertook field course in 2015 were asked to fill a questionnaire to describe their positive and negative experiences, what they learnt, and what they recommend as a policy for the improvement of field courses. Thirty percent (30 %) sample of students were sampled to fill in questionnaire. The study used the Likert Scale to assess the perceptions of students on the administration of field courses. The students were therefore asked the following questions and were required to rank their answers as indicated. Having undertaken the course PSA 312, please answer the following questions as honestly as you can using the choices provided;

Perception Question on Administration and Management of Field Course You attended (Likert Scaled; Agree = A{3}, Not Sure =NS{2}, Disagree =D{1}). Tick appropriate answer.

Perception Statements (Below)	Disagree(D) 1	Not Sure (NS) 2	Agree(A) 3
The field course was a useful learning to me			
We had prior preparations for the field course			
Our department involved us in the preparations			
The preparation period was adequate			
The amount we paid was commensurate with Expectations			
It was a nice experience learning outside class			

II List some challenges you can associate with the field course you went through;

III Suggest some ways to likely improve the field course;

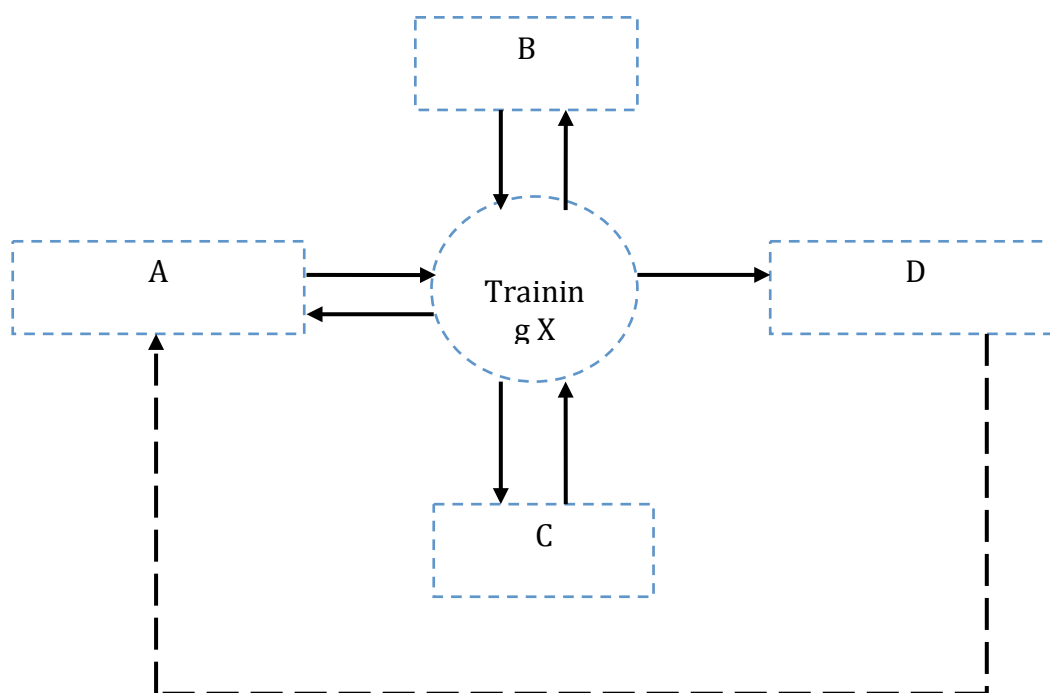
*****Thank you for participating*****

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The research draws its theoretical foundations from systematic approach to training. The concept of systematic training originates from the systems theory which considers training as a sub-system interacting with the other sub-systems upon which an organization depends for its progress and its survival. It is as a logical relationship between the sequential stages in the process of investigating training needs, designing, delivering and validating training (Buckley, 2009). Systematic approach to training is therefore a training that is done after careful planning and its implementation is done according to plan.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

On the basis of the theoretical framework above, we come up with a conceptual framework to capture the interacting variables. The inputs (operations, procedures, etc.) determine the outputs (successes in administration and management of field courses). At the heart of all these is training needs being met under diverse intervening variables (internal and external) such as respective faculties and staff, the Commission of University Education (CUE) policies on higher education, prevailing international policies, and stakeholders' demands.



Source: Chelang’a and Juma, 2016.

In the framework above; A – represents the input, B – is the internal variables, C – external variables, X- the processing (training), and D – output (deliverables). At the end of the whole interactive process, the output informs what future inputs may be needed for the progress of the system.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study in its attempt to find students’ perception of the administration and management of field courses pegged its finding presentations on the basis of objectives as follows;

- Evaluation of field course administration and management in Moi University
- Examination of Moi university policy on field course management
- Establishing students’ perception field course administration and management
- Suggestions on possible solutions to field course challenges

Qualitative analysis of data involved summary of questionnaire data, classification of responses, and bringing out respondents’ voices through quotations. However, respondents were given pseudo names so as to maintain confidentiality. Data was generated from both male and female students as indicated in table 1.

Table 1: Gender of student respondents

	Frequency	Percentage
Male	51	75
Female	17	25
Total	68	100

Source: Field data, 2015 (Researchers)

A total of 68 students participated in the study. Seventy five (75) percent of the respondents were male, reflecting the male domination in the admission to the degree programmes and the university. It also reflects male domination in the Bachelors of Arts degree in the department of History, Political Science Public Administration. The respondents were asked questions related

to their experiences on the field course, their perceptions on the administration and management of the field course, and the challenges. They were also asked to provide suggestions on how the course should be managed.

Evaluation of field course administration and management in Moi University

Importance of Field Courses

In the past, field trips/ courses at Moi University have been organized, to serve generally as student excursions for both academic as well as pleasure. The university funded such trips to places within and outside the country with the hope that the trips would enhance the academic and social development of students. The field trip courses were not seriously evaluated as students did not earn credits for trips taken. Recent changes in the curriculum have made field trips to be re-focused as field courses which must be assessed and therefore contributed to the students' final grades. Field courses are therefore compulsory in all university degree programmes and the students pay fees for the course. Consequently, departments are expected to plan for the places to be visited during field courses and students are expected to write field course reports which are assessed. The objectives of field courses are to bring out a symbiotic relationship between theory and practice. With changed curriculum, the management of the field courses was expected to change to reflect the changed requirements.

Administration of Field Courses

In evaluating Moi University field courses, there might be need to reconsider whether the students taking Public Administration for example should be combined with those taking Penology or History during a field course study in light of the administration and logistical challenges. An engagement in a field course should from the onset fill some academic gap(s) at minimum which we can term- pedagogical/fundamental issues which can be; enhancing active learning, promoting critical thinking, learning styles, building learning communities, and building skills. Some key factors that promote successful field courses include; academic rigor, use of mixed teaching methods, and facilitated reflection synthesizing experiences with academic content. According to Lori Gardinier and Dawn Colquitt-Anderson (2010):

There is no formula for the percentage of time that should be spent in formal class time, seeing cultural/historical sites and events, doing field work, or engaging in peer-to-peer cultural exchange. Regardless of the mix, students should arrive at the destination with grounding in both the academic and cultural context through a combination of pre-departure lectures, guided research, online discussions, readings, and cultural events relevant to the trip.

Learning Experiences

Field courses can also be evaluated in terms of student learning experiences. Field data indicated that students appreciated field courses because of the exposure they got. They were also able to appreciate the challenges faced by various organizations visited

Students were able to appreciate the role of theory and practice in public administration. They particularly understood how theories reflected historical contexts of time and culture which developed. Such students include Donald¹ who appreciated the relevance of culture, social change, socialization, stratification, social structure...class, race, and gender in shaping individuals.

A female student, Grace² noted that she had the opportunity to relate theory learned in class to real life situation. This was made possible by group interactions with lectures and students and

the brainstorming sessions and discussions. According one student Donald³, the field course was not only educative but was also very relevant to the course in Public Administration. Clement⁴ further reiterated that the field course enabled students were exposed to reality as opposed to theory. Donald⁵ thought that the social element of the field course enabled peers, lecturers, resource persons and local community to interact. Abigael⁶ concludes that the field course has triggered me to learn more on theories which are applicable in various situations in the field. I have also learnt other approaches for dealing with people's challenges in administrative issues. The field course has enabled me to appreciate my passion for political science and public administration as a discipline.

The field course provided an interactive session outside campus and students were able to intermingle with the coastal communities, fellow students from other campuses, and lecturers outside a formal setting. This made Adhiambo⁷ to conclude that "the field course was quite interesting. It had a positive impact to both my academic and social life. I learnt new social skills and visited several new and interesting places. I appreciate and commend the department for this course"

Cherusang⁸ noted that in all the public institutions visited during the field were bureaucratic. There were chains of command and procedures to be followed before they were allowed into the institutions. This caused delays in the field programmes. The students were able to learn the functions of parastatals visited. Diva⁹ cited the social- cultural and economic activities of the coastal region e.g. mining industries, Christian and Muslim civilization, tourism, and education among others, as what were learned lessons. According to Cherusang¹⁰, the visit to Coast Development Authority enabled students to learn how local communities contribute to development through participation by identifying and prioritizing their most felt needs for first hand solution. Cherusang¹¹ thought that in the visit to the Provincial Headquarters students learned the relations between central government and provincial administration while in the Kenya Ferry services, the students appreciated the use of six ferries to transport approximately ten thousand passengers and three hundred vehicles daily from Mombasa Island to Likoni mainland. Cherusang¹² thought that the Diani and Kenyatta beaches were tourist attractions, for both local and international visitors, which contributed a substantial amount of money to the Kenya economy. Cherusang¹³ thought that the coastal people were soft spoken, generous, and willing to live as one community. Other students appreciated the historical sites, the cosmopolitan nature, and the hospitality of the coastal community

The challenges facing institutions visited include lack of political good will from the government, instability, inappropriate technology, financial management, organizational capacity building, operational inefficiency, drug and substance abuse, and insecurity among others. According to Mary¹⁴, these are challenges which are common in all government institutions particularly in The Coast Development Authority, Kenya Ferry Services and the Coastal Provincial Administration which were visited. These challenges can be addressed by sensitization, public participation, depolitization of projects, timely financing, training, outsourcing, team building and bonding, monitoring and evaluation, and social responsibility among others

Examination of Moi university policy on field course

Moi University does not seem to have a comprehensive policy on field courses. The Senate however, requires that field courses are evaluated and students earn credits. Field courses are therefore compulsory in for all degree programmes. Generally, students who are allowed to

proceed on field trip are those who have completed their fees as at the time of the trip. The university uses the fees paid to meet the expenses for the trip such as students' and lecturers allowances and fuel among others. without a written policy, the administration and management of field courses are made with varying requirements, standards and results. Consequently, this creates problems of implementation and evaluation and hence causes confusion to both students and the instructors.

Due to the lack of a common guideline on field courses, each department is responsible for designing and implementing their own rules and guidelines. According to Ousuru Maurice Cornel who took his field course for the Public Administration degree program in 2015, the objectives of the course were to:

- i. Change theory into pragmatic undertakings.
- ii. Make the student develop their skills.
- iii. Encourage the student to pursue their specialization passionately.
- iv. Enable the student to know more about organizations visited.
- v. Experience the pragmatic roles of the administrator at individual and group undertakings.

PERCEPTIONS ON ADMINISTRATION AND CHALLENGES

Logistics and Planning:

Mokir15 thought that the field course faced logistical problems from the onset. He states It started from the complexities from the department right from the time the list of students was being prepared with some names missing from the list despite them having cleared all the fees required. Still on the same there were delays in clearance of funds for the trip forcing it being pushed forward from Sunday to Monday which affected the planned program with some appointments being cancelled at the last minute

Mokir16 further noted that students were not issued with programmes of activities. This made them unaware of places to visit each day and consequently made them to spend more money on transport from the places they resided as they would converge with others instead of being picked on the road if one resided along the way to the place visited. It also led to time loss, reporting late and not starting scheduled activities on time. Adam17 concurred that a lot of time was wasted by students during time of boarding the buses. Steve added that a lot of time was wasted waiting for the buses or for students to board the buses. Clement18 reported that students were not provided with a programme for the field course. Alex19 added that the students looked disorganized because they were not informed in advance where they were to visit. Jerry criticized the field course coordinators for poor planning. He says "it was baffling to see the technocrats concerned with disseminating good managerial skills put in disarray by the lack of the same skills. Logistics were poorly managed from the word go with the journey set to start by 4pm only to take place at 10.00 pm

Transport and Accommodation

Transport was insufficient as students were crowded in the buses. Some students arranged to travel with their friends, while others who were not part of the team "gate crushed". According to Diva20, the trip to Mombasa started late because there was a shortage of buses. Cherusang21 affirms this point when he stated that "the number of buses given to the department were few as the seats could not accommodate all the students. This led to overloading...and further led to reaching Mombasa in the late hours of the night" Adhiambo22 described it as "the number of buses offered during the trip was inadequate, unfair for students to stand in a bus from Eldoret to Mombasa and yet they have paid the requisite fees. In case of

an accident (God forbid) the insurance company will not cover passengers who were standing in the bus” The problem of transport was compounded by the difficulty of confirming names of the students on the field course before they were allowed to board the buses to Mombasa. A student Jerry43 described it as “a nightmare”

Mokir23 reported that some students stood in buses during the trip to Mombasa because there were more passengers than the buses could accommodate. Another student, Amina24 described the situation as a long and tiring journey due to the disorganization and poor planning. This led to delay in some vehicles causing stopover in some vehicles in order to wait for others. Thus the journey looked longer than expected”

A female student Grace25 described the accommodation as “chaotic...the organizers never prepared us on what to expect “It was indicated that accommodation was to be at a reasonable price but this was never the case”Amina26 on the other hand described accommodation as a challenge because most students were visiting the town of Mombasa for the first time and were left to look for lodges at night in a place they were not familiar with. Jerry27 thought that the lack of planning for accommodation for students was a great risk. He adds “the students were dropped off at Mtwapa and it was then each man and woman for himself or herself” Other students noted that accommodation in Mombasa was expensive because of tourism. This made majority of the students to suffer.

Allowances and Duration of the Course

The University charges fees for field courses, out of which some amount is paid back to students, an amount of Ksh. 500 for accommodation and food, which was thought to be inadequate. Diva28, for example was forced to get extra money from parents. Mokir29 emphasized this point by stating that the amount offered to students “was not enough to cater for all expenses ranging from transport, meals and accommodation for those who did not have relatives to stay with” Jerry30 even describes succinctly that “it was pathetic to learn that so many students could not be paid allowances by the coordinators because of omissions of their names and yet they had paid the full fees as required by the university. Jerry31 further thought that the students should have been paid Ksh. 8,000 which they paid as field course fees. He32 states “it was just unbelievable that the students were given Ksh. 2,000 to cater for four days breakfast, lunch, supper, refreshments, accommodation, medical and miscellaneous expenses. How on earth can one live on Ksh. 500 a day in Mombasa while you are not a resident of Mombasa? This was my worst experience of all!” David33 recommended that the students’ allowance should be increased even if it means raising the fees a little bit.

The duration of the field course was short as part of the time was utilized on traveling. Grace34 for instance noted that:

the time for data collection was not enough as lecturers were always in a hurry to ensure that we visited all the proposed institutions. This was not possible due to the distance between the sites that were to be visited

A female student Grace35, described that lecturers were in a hurry to ensure that students moved from one institution to another as per appointments. This was difficult because the time to move from one institution to another was inadequate. According to Amina36, “time was the greatest challenge in the field course. Students were deprived time for visiting more places in the coastal region” Cherusang37 added that time was not sufficient and this led to the

cancellation of some of the places like Kenya Ports Authority. Furthermore, the time for the visit to the beaches was shortened.

Environment and Teamwork

Students reported that Mombasa, which is a popular destination, had a hostile environment due to high temperatures as compared to Eldoret. Cold drinking water was sold and this increased the economic burden to the students. This gives the impression that students were not prepared and hence

Some students reported that they were unable to interact with the coastal mijikenda communities due to language barrier. This is curious because one would expect that there is a greater general understanding of Kiswahili language in the coastal region and the students should not have had a problem of interacting with the local communities. Alternatively, some of the students may have had the challenge of understanding the colloquial Kiswahili

Donald³⁸ reported that there was lack of teamwork during the course and this led to a "general misunderstanding of the goals and objectives, resulting in delays hence not executed in ways that maximizes their educational value to students" Adam³⁹ cited that some students got lost occasionally because they were not familiar with the city of Mombasa. He suggested that time should be allocated for students' orientation to the city of Mombasa.

Lack of learning

According to Tom⁴⁰, learning took place in several institutions except Bombolulu centre where students assembled for a short while, after which they dispersed. Tom⁴¹ also noted that learning was ineffective in some organizations visited because either the speakers were not audible or the students made noise. Further, traveling long distances to different organization in a hot environment caused exhaustion and reduced concentration span which was not favourable for successful learning.

One student Alex⁴² indicated during the visit to the Coast Development Authority, students were given lectures for a long time while standing and taking notes. This was tiresome and hence impaired learning.

Suggestions on the Improvements of Field Course Administration and Management

PLANNING

Field courses should be well planned early enough and be executed meticulously. The planning should ensure adequate transport for the students taking the course and only the bonafide students should be allowed to travel. Early planning will also ensure that students pay the requisite fees early so that no student is left out due to non payment. One student, Jerry⁴⁴ recommended that the coordinators of the course should draw and publish a list of the names of students who were due for field course and have fulfilled the requirements. This ensures that the students are communicated in good time to allow for any anomalies to be corrected in time before the trips are taken. Donald⁴⁵ recommended that students should be actively involved in pre-visit preparations so as to help the students prepare themselves. He suggested a reconnaissance visit by students' representatives to be carried out "to enable them do a feasibility survey on behalf of their colleagues and come up with information about the accommodation and other important information that will facilitate field trip preparation" and that the field course should be carried out during the second semester of the third year so as to give students enough time to write the field course report. He further recommended that the

organizers of field courses should “draw clear guideline of time table on the places to visit to avoid students complaining because knowing where they are going and prepare in advance what they should do” Clement⁴⁶ added that it was not prudent to combine field course where all the students in the department traveled together. Transport threatened to ruin the field course. Further, Josma, ⁶⁰ emphasized that students should be involved choosing places to be visited during field courses. According to Donald⁶¹, the field courses should include a visit to Parliament and the Senate which were relevant areas to students of political science. Mokir⁴⁷ recommends the improvement on logistics to avoid time wasting and delays on visiting organizations. He also emphasized on the need improved communication with students on all issues to do with field course such as fees and expectations. Planning would therefore would include identifying places for students’ accommodation. According to Adam⁶², the students should be accommodated in the Central Business District (CBD) for convenience. Tobias⁶³ suggests that the coordinators of field courses should arrange for cheap accommodation in the hostels in Mombasa satellite campuses

Time management and Timing of Field Course

Efforts should be made to follow an agreed time schedule to avoid students wasting time in waiting for others for too long. Clement⁴⁸ reported that there were several changes on departure dates and time. This created anxiety and caused psychological effects on the students before the trip started. The students were not in agreement on the timing of the field course. While others preferred the field course to take place at the end of the second semester, before filed attachment course, others prefer the mid semester. Clement⁴⁹ thought that the timing of the field course to start at the end of a semester was wrong. This is because the students will lack continuity as they break for holiday after the field course. In addition, the students will not find time to write the field report in ideal environment. He suggested that students taking different degree programmes should not be mixed during field course as they increase the numbers to unmanageable size. Donald⁵³ suggests that worksheets should be provided to students to facilitate learning experience. An important aspect which field courses should factor is the availability of officers targeted in host organization. Clement ⁵⁰ reported that in all the institutions visited, the students were not addressed by the Chief Executives, which he thought was a setback as students would have learnt more from them

Transport and Contingencies

Mokir⁵¹ suggests that transport should be convenient to all students. Excess passengers on the buses should be avoided. Jerry⁵² also suggests that the buses assigned for field courses should be serviced in good time to avoid cases where buses arrive from other long trips and are assigned new trips before service is undertaken. In addition Lecturers who accompany students during field courses should be paid honoraria because trips are time consuming. Besides, students suggested that lecturers should be given a miscellaneous budget to cater for student emergencies including medical cases. The student reports suggest that some of them were not aware that the University provided a medical insurance for them while on field course.

Increase students’ allowances and number of days

A student Josma⁵⁴ recommended a student daily allowance of Ksh. 1,500 per day during field course. Many added that if allowances are not increased, then the university should meet the cost of students’ accommodation and upkeep. Another student recommended that students should form Associations which will assist them financially during the field course sessions. Jerry⁵⁵ however suggested that the university should urgently revise the allowances given to

students to reflect the current prevailing economic situation in the country and increase the length of the course. In our opinion, field courses should be financed by the Higher Education Loans Board (HELB) so that all students are given equal financial support to cover the course. Currently, HELB finances only students doing twelve week field attachment course. The length of the field course should be increased to one week and should be offered once every academic year so that students can learn from different regions of the country. For instance, Linda⁵⁶ wrote that: Field course should be done every semester from the first year and a curriculum be developed such that visits to relevant organizations are done in relations to the learned theories of the same semester. This will make the course comprehensive as there will be a total of eight field courses

However, one student Josma⁵⁷ recommends two weeks for field course, once every semester, for it to be meaningful. Diva⁵⁸ added that the places for field courses should include neighbouring countries like Uganda, Rwanda and Tanzania so that the students can learn different administrative systems. Another student Laibon⁵⁹ thought that field courses outside Kenya would give students international exposure. He further thought that students should be taught on how to collect data and write a good report before they field course is carried out.

CHALLENGES

- I. The major challenges of the field course are related to planning, transport, and accommodation. Some students were not aware that they were covered by a life insurance while on field course. For instance, one student recommended that "insurance cover should be arranged to students while at the field because accidents can happen and needs compensation". Sixteen students (23.5 %) - 12 male and 4 female had no idea on their field course learned experiences, challenges encountered in the field, and recommendations on how to improve the field course. This is part of the group of students who believe that field courses are for their leisure. No wonder, in a previous field course, some students cheated by copying reports from other students. Students were not contented with their daily allowance of Ksh 500 and yet they paid Ksh 8,000 for the field course. The students were not aware that the Ksh 8,000 paid was allocated to them for their up keep and the university meets the lecturers per diem from a different budget
- II. Students related theories learnt in class and their experiences in the field
- III. Transport and accommodation were the students' greatest challenges in the course
- IV. Students preferred a longer period of at least seven days for the field course. One student for instance wrote "Students of political science should visit a County Assembly, National Assembly and Senate as mandatory during their field course visits
- V. Some students did not know the course code for field course. While some thought it was PSA 312, others thought it was PSA 412. This indicates that the preparation for the course was inadequate. Another possible explanation is that the students did the field course after third year hence changed the course code to reflect their fourth year status. It is noted that this study covered two cohorts of students were offered the field course together and hence the confusion. Despite these excuses, the university has only one course code for the field course
- VI. Up to eight students shared a single hotel room for accommodation. This enabled them share the cost of accommodation. This was reported by both male and female students

Students of BA in Political Science and Public Administration rated field course as an important part of their study. Alex⁶⁴ for instance, describes that "the concept of field course is an

excellent undertaking which need to be enhanced. It provides a student with the opportunity to experience the real world and prepare them for the tasks ahead” Majority of the students however reported challenges which were associated with inadequate planning and execution of the course and therefore recommended that students should be given sufficient lectures concerning the field course requirements including transport, accommodation, and places to be visited before departure.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Indeed this study finds that field courses are important for gap filling of lectures and practicalities. Perceptions vary about the administration and management of this course, and this is about expected ideals vis a vis the practice (facilitation, delays, inadequacies, and logistics). Not only do students need them, they are also good to lecturers as a break from the back-to-back semester programmes currently run by the university. The difference in the way these programmes are run by one school and department to another is a point to inquire on further about the inherent quality.

Moi University should formulate policies, which should guide Field courses in all programmes. This is important not only for quality delivery of the course but also for easy administration and management of the course. The systematic approach to training should be used to ensure that the design, delivery

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Pseudo names of selected students where quotations were made from their reports

1	Donald ¹	14	Cherusang ¹⁴	27	Jerry ²⁷	40	Tom ⁴⁰	54	Josma ⁵⁴
2	Grace ²	15	Mokir ¹⁵	28	Diva ²⁸	41	Tom ⁴¹	55	Jerry ⁵⁵
3	Donald ³	16	Mokir ¹⁶	29	Mokin ²⁹	42	Alex ⁴²	56	Linda ⁵⁶
4	Clement ⁴	17	Adam ¹⁷	30	Jerry ³⁰	43	Jerry ⁴³	57	Josma ⁵⁷
5	Donald ⁵	18	Clement ¹⁸	31	Jerry ³¹	44	Jerry ⁴⁴	58	Diva ⁵⁸
6	Abigael ⁶	19	Alex ¹⁹	32	Jerry ³²	45	Donald	59	Laibon ⁵⁹
7	Adhiambo ⁷	20	Diva ²⁰	33	David ³³	46	Clement ⁴⁶	60	Josma ⁶⁰
8	Cherusang ⁸	21	Cherusang ²¹	34	Grace ³⁴	48	Clement	61	Donald ⁶¹
9	Cherusang ⁹	22	Adhiambo ²²	35	Grace ³⁵	49	Clement ⁴⁹	62	Adan ⁶²
10	Cherusang ¹⁰	23	Mokir ²³	36	Amina ³⁶	50	Clement ⁵⁰	63	Tobias ⁶³
11	Cherusang ¹¹	24	Amina ²⁴	37	Cherusang ³⁷	51	Mokir ⁵¹	64	Alex ⁶⁴
12	Mary ¹²	25	Grace ²⁵	38	Donald ³⁸	52	Jerry ⁵²		
13	Cherusang ¹³	26	Amina ²⁶	39	Adan ³⁹	53	Donald ⁵³		