

A PARADIGM SHIFT IN CURRICULA DEVELOPMENT PROCESSES IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES: Towards a responsive and participatory multi-stakeholder approach

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Abstract (E3001)

The mandate of public universities is teaching, research and outreach. To fulfil this mandate, it is incumbent upon the universities to develop and deliver curricula that are current, relevant and responsive to the needs of society. However curriculum development and review processes in most public universities are lengthy, non-inclusive and academia driven. This situation does not lend itself to the dynamic agricultural industry where consumer, farmer and technical knowledge and skills are in constant flux. Increasing external and internal pressures calls for a paradigm shift in curriculum development and delivery processes, towards a responsive and participatory multi-stakeholder approach. This study was done to critically review curriculum development and review process and establish the effectiveness of stakeholder engagement in Egerton and Nairobi Universities. Objectives of the study were to document the main stages of the curriculum development in selected public universities, the time taken to develop and review curricula, assess stakeholder selection and engagement in curriculum development and delivery processes. Data was collected using a semi structured questionnaire, desktop review of past reports and key informant interviews. The questionnaire was administered to five lecturers randomly selected from five departments at the University of Nairobi's college of Agriculture and Veterinary Sciences and two departments at Egerton University. The findings show that development of new curricula takes a minimum of two years in both universities while the review process takes longer. Most respondents observed that the many stages in curriculum development prolonged the process yet they did not add much value. The study also revealed that there is minimal stakeholder engagement in curriculum development and delivery processes and that the selection process is subjective. From the synthesis of information gathered in the study, the paper proposes a paradigm shift in curriculum development and delivery processes at the macro, meso and micro levels to ensure meaningful stakeholder engagement and ensure responsiveness of curricula to internal and external changes. The paper also proposes some strategies that universities can use to reposition themselves as network brokers in the agricultural information and innovation systems.

Key words: Curriculum development, stakeholders, higher learning, agriculture