

A Mixed methods research to determine factors influencing time to degree for undergraduates students in private universities

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Introduction

Institutions of higher learning consider timely graduation rates as one of the key performance indicator. According to Leticia & Astin, (2005) faculty and student affairs officers consider timely degree attainment as a measure of success of their work with students. Delayed degree completion has far reaching consequences not just to the student but, to the society which bears the largest share towards cost of service delivery (Lassibille, 2011). Long duration to graduation can affect available resources per student and frequently delays the transition process from full time studies to the job market, this decreases labor supply and tax revenues (Hakkinen& Uusitalo, 2003). Having a better understanding of the various factors that affect student progression to degree would be very crucial in utilizing all the available resources to improve the higher education system. Despite all the rewards and social benefits, timely graduation in various universities and colleges globally is far from certain. In United States, time-to- degree beyond four years has increased over the past three decades turning out to be a noteworthy concern for the policy makers (Bound,Lovenheim, & Turner, 2010). Nationally, more than 60% of the students in United States take longer than four years (Nate, 2011). European countries have not been left behind either; Germany, France, Denmark, and Sweden have reported their average time to a bachelor's degree exceeds the legal duration (Brunello & Winter-Ebmer, 2003). Despite availability of higher education data, there has been limited studies on time to degree in Sub Saharan African and to be more precise in Kenya. In South Africa for example, only 21% of university students graduate within four academic years (Murray, 2014). Majority of studies on student progression are concentrated in developed countries and it would be unadvisable to generalize their outcomes to developing countries like Kenya. As part of an effort to fill this research gap in Kenya, this study intends to examine factors influencing time to degree for private Universities in respect to student's; family background, academic performance, financial support, and personal characteristics.