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OUTSOURCED ACADEMIC RESOURCE PROVIDER'S COMPETITIVE ENVIRONMENT AND INSTITUTIONAL MANAGEMENT IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN NYERI AND KIAMBU COUNTIES, KENYA

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Abstract:
The purpose of this study was to explore whether the outsourced academic provider's competitive environment influenced institutional management in public universities in Nyeri and Kiambu counties. A hybrid theoretical framework of Resource based theory and Institutional management efficiency theory buttressed the study. Purposeful sampling of 20 deans of schools, 3 human resource managers 122 heads of departments and 415 lecturers was used. The study made use of questionnaires, interview guide and focus group discussions to collect data. The study utilized a Methodological triangulation research design. To ensure the validity of the instruments, the Research objectives were crosschecked with the corresponding items. The spearman's split-half technique of assessing reliability of the instruments was used. Inter-Rater technique was used in this study to measure credibility. Dependability was ascertained by means of triangulation. Pearson product moment correlation coefficient technique was used. A correlation coefficient of 0.73 for the two halves was considered sufficient. Descriptive and inferential statistics to evaluate the dependence of measures of organizational efficiency was used. The study reviewed that, public universities should evaluate academic resource providers in order to produce quality graduates and also to be able to control and reduce operational costs.

Keywords: competitive, academic resource outsourcing, institution management

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1. Background information

1.1 Academic Resource Outsourcing

As establishments strive to operate more efficiently, they must try to establish the best level of outsourcing in order to achieve their operations and business goals. Due consideration must be given to the fact that outsourcing is a sensitive labour issue for trade unions, because fewer employees will be required as the company engages in more outsourcing. Since outsourcing is an integral part of an institution's supply chain, and better supply chain management has become an important part of an institution's operations strategy, it is vital that the above concerns are adequately addressed. Frazier, (2002)

A survey published by the National Association of College Auxiliary Services in 1997 captured more than 70 services by institutions of higher education. The survey results support that almost all services are outsourced, within higher education. The survey results showed a high degree of similarity between public and private institutions. However, of the 71 services covered in the survey, public institutions outsourced only two services to a higher degree while private institutions outsourced 23 of the services to a higher degree (an 8% or more difference). It appears that public institutions are more likely to have sufficient human resources or equipment compared to private institutions, and thus decreasing the need to outsource services. The 1997 survey also suggests that the extent to which an institution outsources services is influenced by the size of an institution. Larger institutions tend to perform more services in-house than smaller institutions, even for specialized services such as waste and hazardous waste removal and textbook publishing. Conversely, larger institutions are more likely than smaller institutions to outsource auxiliary services such as housing facilities, bookstores and athletic concessions. Good instruction cannot be approached as freelance work. A good educator has to be relentlessly conscious of how learners integrate what they are learning into the rest of their lives. The teller at Target just wants you to "Expect more. Pay less," and get out of the way of the next client.

According to Wendler, former chancellor at Southern Illinois University, the outsourcing of secondary functions may allow a university to focus more strongly on its core teaching mission. However, when universities rely on teachers that they treat as labour-for-hire, they can affect the priorities of the entire faculty. Rather than stewards, they become supplicants. They learn they must not challenge students or administrators or give any offense because they are little valued and easily replaced. Inoffensive educators stop looking to the horizon and start looking at their feet. From that posture, though, how can they prepare students to cross that next ocean or climb that next mountain?

According to Wendler universities need a clear faculty voice that addresses the calling of their profession and its importance to the future of the nation. What we've frequently gotten instead are third-party rehashings of how many credit hours constitute an overload or how to reorganize benefits for the next batch of retirees. Wendler further questions, *"Where are the American Association of University Professors,* *the National Education Association and other trade associations? First, faculty outsourced their leadership to unions. Now, the faculty itself is being outsourced. Is compensation critical?"* Yes, but only after a mutual understanding of the nature of the work is reached. Wendler ventures even further to say "*The essence of the university — enlightened and energetic faculty in contact with the student of like mind and disposition — has to be treated differently. Teaching and scholarship are not ancillary services at a good university and cannot be parcelled off to the lowest-price providers. Knowledge work must be treated as a long-term investment, not just a current cost. But what is the value of "efficiency" when the priorities of our universities are "Targeted" to maximize the sale of low-cost, uniformly produced, discrete packets of information distributed by indistinguishable day labourers. Sometimes the lowest price isn't the best deal.*"

According to Gay and Essinger (2000) outsourcing "*is one of the fastest-growing and arguably most important areas of business activity*". Establishments enter into outsourcing arrangements for different reasons. LeFort (1998) founder and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Connextions.net says "different establishments outsource different services and for different reasons. According to LeFort, if a survey were to be conducted of "*Fortune 1000 companies such as Mercedes-Benz, Olympus, JP Morgan Chase, EarthLink, Nextel, and Blue Cross Blue Shield – all of them would have many different outsourcing goals. Some may emphasize flexibility and speed-to-market; others would be seeking cost savings or capital cost avoidance or brand protection. Often, there are multiple goals across the board. However, each is able to maintain its competitive edge and its leadership standing by outsourcing."*

1.2 Academic resource provider's competitive environment and institution management

Competition, downsizing, the move to flatter organization, the search for greater flexibility, rapid changes in technology, and the emphasis on concentrating on core competencies are cited as major drivers for the upsurge in outsourcing (Huber, 1993). Cumulative experience in outsourcing enhances quality improvement, with simultaneous cost reduction asserts (Dyer and Ouchi, 1993). A decade ago, cost reduction took centre stage as organizations sought short-term, 'band aid' solutions from outsourcing and received equivalent tactical benefits. But, the market has turned. It's 'do or die' and Outsourcing is no longer about cost savings. Now it's an essential revenue and growth strategy for every organization whether private or public In support of this view, Gay and Essinger (2000) say outsourcing "*is one of the fastest-growing and arguably most important areas of business activity*". Companies enter into outsourcing arrangements for different reasons. LeFort (1998) founder and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Connextions.net says "*different companies outsource different services and for different reasons*. He further continues to say that if a survey were to be conducted of Fortune 1000 companies such as Mercedes-Benz, Olympus, JP Morgan Chase, EarthLink, Nextel, and Blue Cross Blue Shield – all would have many different outsourcing goals. Some may emphasize flexibility and speed-to-market; others would be seeking cost savings or capital cost avoidance or brand protection. Often, there are multiple goals across the board. However, each is able to maintain its competitive edge and its leadership standing by outsourcing. The upsurge in outsourcing over the last 20 years has been fuelled by arguments from management gurus and leading academics that an organization's competitive advantage stems from its ability to identify, concentrate on and develop its core competencies and activities, and outsource anything which is non-core. Sands (1998) lists a number of reasons for public schools to outsource various tasks to third party vendors. According to this institute, outsourcing improves the focus of the institution on educational issues related to student achievement. In other words, public schools' primary mission should be student success while others focus on supporting that endeavour. Another reason is the advantage of specialized capabilities and knowledge, which normally a public institution could not afford in-house. Every organization, especially public schools, is limited in the resources it can devote to any given task. Therefore, when you are able to outsource or out-task some of the peripheral tasks, the institution can redirect staff and budget to the core mission and vision of the institution. In the early days, transportation departments were the biggest targets for outsourcing and continue to be a major target. The new century brought forth the term "out-tasking," which implies the hiring of a specialized vendor to provide one or more services within an existing department, such as custodial cleaning and landscaping, within the confines of an existing maintenance department. No matter what phrase is chosen the industry and strategy of outsourcing is not going away but rather growing everyday into a billion-dollar business.

In his exploration of the competitive environment, Porter (1990) identified five forces of competitive environment: bargaining power of suppliers, bargaining power of customers, threat of new entrants, threat of substitution, and rivalry among current competitors. Porter (1990) starts from the various premises in the elaboration of his theory. These premises include (i) the nature of the competition and the sources of competitive advantage are disparate among industries and even among the segments of the same industry. Additionally, a country can influence and obtain the competitive advantage within a certain sector of industry, and (ii) the globalization of the competition and the appearance of the trans-national companies do not eliminate the influence of a certain country for getting the competitive advantage. Beginning from these principles, Porter identifies a classification of determinants which is the source for getting competitive advantages by the nations.

According to Porter (1990) the system of determinants theory is anchored on the classification of determinants, referred by Porter "diamond" and which consists of the factorial determinants: the endowment of a country which factors the determinants of the demand, the features of the internal market, up and downstream industries, the strategy and structure of the companies and the rivalry among them and the domestic competition. These four elements are considerably influenced by others two factors: the chance and the governmental policy. All these elements are conditioned one to another. In Porter's view, the countries have success "*where the national diamond is the most favourable*". The more complex and dynamic the economic environment of the country, the more likely is some companies to fail if they cannot capitalize in an adequate way to the requests of this environment. The factorial determinants represent the starting point necessary to enter in competition. The classical economic theory identifies the labour, land and capital as the factors of the production. Porter demonstrates that, even the endowment with factors is obviously important, the critical element for a country to be competitive is to create new factors and to improve the existing ones. According to Negriţoiu Mişu, (1997).the competitive advantage should be created, it is not inherited.

In Porters theory of competitive environment, the production aspects are distributed into the following classifications: human resources - quantity, the level of instruction, the costs with the labour, the time of working, the attitude to working, natural resources: abundance, quality, accessibility, the costs with land, water, mineral resources, forest; knowledge resources - the supply of the scientific, technical and marketing knowledge used for creating and distributing goods and services. These knowledge are located in universities, research institutes, informational system, data banks, and commercial associations, capital resources which is the level and the cost of the capital available for financing the industry, determined by the saving rate of the economy and the structure of the financial national market which is different from a country to another, although we attend the globalizations of the capital markets, and infrastructure which includes not only the transport systems, post, communications, payment systems and the systems used to transfer money, but also different infrastructure elements that determine the attractiveness of a country regarding the quality of life and work conditions.

Strategy is a major channel of connections between the competitive environment and resources. According to Harris and Ruefli, 2000), Strategy acts as a fulcrum in the deployment of firm resources in the competitive environment with the aim to generate sustained competitive advantage. In particular, firms constantly take offensive and defensive strategic actions vis-à-vis competitors, thus modifying the competitive environment (Baum and Korn, 1996). According to Collis, 1991), strategy is dependent on and constrained by the controlled resources and coordinates the development and protection of existing resources and the creation or acquisition of new resources, taking into account the competitive environment. Centring on interactive features of competition and cooperation, Lado, Boyd and Hanlon (1997) explain that firms combining high levels of competitive and cooperative orientations will generate higher rents because of greater knowledge development, economic and market growth and technological progress. According to Courbois & Temple (1975), Gollop (1979), Kurosawa (1975), Pineda (1990), Saari (2006) productivity describes various measures of the efficiency of production. A productivity measure is expressed as the ratio of output to inputs used in a production process, i.e. output per unit of input. Productivity is a crucial factor in production performance of firms and nations. Increasing national productivity can raise living standards because more real income improves people's ability to purchase goods and services, enjoy leisure, improve housing and education and contribute to social and environmental programs. Productivity growth also helps businesses to be more profitable In order to measure productivity of a nation or an institution, it is necessary to operationalize the same concept of productivity as in a production unit or a company, yet, the object of modelling is substantially wider and the information more aggregate. The calculations of productivity of a nation or an institution are based on the time series of the System. National accounting is a system based on the recommendations of the UN (SNA 93) to measure total production and total income of a nation and how they are used. (Saari 2006,) According to Fuller (2016) 'technology has enabled massive personal productivity gains — computers, spreadsheets, email, and other advances have made it possible for a knowledge worker to seemingly produce more in a day than was previously possible in a year. Environmental factors such as sleep and leisure play a significant role in work productivity and received wage.' *Gibson, Matthew; Shrader, Jeffrey (2014),* specify that drivers of productivity growth for creative and knowledge workers include improved or intensified exchange with peers or co-workers, as more productive peers have a stimulating effect on one's own productivity. Borowiecki, Karol, (2013) assert that productivity is influenced by effective supervision and job satisfaction. Having an effective or knowledgeable supervisor (for example a supervisor who uses the Management by objectives method) has an easier time motivating their employees to produce more in quantity and quality. An employee who has an effective supervisor, motivating them to be more productive is likely to experience a new level of job satisfaction thereby becoming a driver of productivity itself. Thompson, (1981)

Workplace bullying results in a loss of productivity, as measured by self-rated job performance, Helge, Sheehan, Cooper, Einarsen, (2010). Over time, targets of bullying will spend more time protecting themselves against harassment by bullies and less time fulfilling their duties, Benoit, Suzanne, (2011). Workplace incivility has also been associated with diminished productivity in terms of quality and quantity of work. A toxic workplace is a workplace that is marked by significant drama and infighting, where personal battles often harm productivity, Benoit, Suzanne (2011). Employees that are distracted these personal battles are unable to devote the necessary time and responsiveness to the achievement of business goals. Bitting, Robert, (2013), when these 'contaminated' employees leave the workplace, it can improve the overall work culture because the remaining staff become more engaged and productive. The presence of a workplace psychopath may have a serious detrimental impact on productivity in an organization, Boddy, (2010). In companies where the traditional hierarchy has been removed in favor of an egalitarian, team-based setup, the employees are often happier, and individual productivity is improved (as they themselves are better placed to increase the efficiency of the work floor). Companies that have these hierarchy removed and have their employees work more in teams are called liberated companies

According to Fuller, Ryan (2016), productivity is one of the main concerns of institutional management. Many establishments have formal programs for continuously improving productivity, such as a production assurance program. Whether they have a formal program or not, establishments are constantly looking for ways to improve quality, reduce downtime and inputs of labor, materials, energy and purchased services. Often simple changes to operating methods or processes increase productivity, but the biggest gains are normally from adopting new technologies, which may require capital expenditures for new equipment, computers or software. Modern productivity science owes much to formal investigations that are associated with scientific management, Nelson, Daniel (1980), argue that although from an individual management perspective, employees may be doing their jobs well and with high levels of individual productivity, but from an organizational perspective their productivity may in fact be zero or effectively negative if they are dedicated to redundant or value destroying activities, According to Mayhew, Ruth, (2011), over long periods of time, small differences in rates of productivity growth compound, like interest in a bank account, and can make an enormous difference to a society's prosperity. Nothing contributes more to reduction of poverty, to increases in leisure, and to the country's ability to finance education, public health, environment and the arts. Productivity is considered basic statistical information for many international comparisons and country performance assessments and there is strong interest in comparing them internationally. The OECD, (2008) publishes an annual Compendium of Productivity Indicators that includes both labor and multi-factor measures of productivity. Several statistical offices publish productivity accounting handbooks and manuals with detailed accounting instructions and definitions. For example, the following: Nothing contributes more to reduction of poverty, to increases in leisure, and to the country's ability to finance education, public health, environment and the arts'. The term 'productive capabilities' embraces the underlying determinants of the efficiency with which public institutions manage to carry out their productive activities. (Jacobides and Winter 2005). Productive capabilities rest on the institution's general and specific knowledge of how to do things (Richardson, 1972; Teece *et al*., 1997), and also involve specific investments in equipment, training, and retention of key personnel, required to put that knowledge to work. Winter (2003) describes as them as 'zero level' capabilities, that is., the bases of a firm's or effectiveness in engaging in its present business activities. Heterogeneity in productive capabilities is typical .because the capability to carry out a complex activity is typically developed in an organization through a long, path-dependent learning process (Winter, 1988), in which there is ample opportunity for various contingencies to shape the way of doing things that ultimately emerges (Levinthal, 1997). Particularly important contingencies are the different 'bets' that actors make, in the face of great uncertainty, as to what will prove to be the most effective way of doing things. Even if the correct recipes become clear, their diffusion is limited by complexity, often due to interactions among activities (Porter, 1996; Rivkin, 2001, Siggelkow, 2001). Effective performance management with a provider is influenced by a clear understanding of the nature of the processes before they are outsourced. Thorough expectation breakdown will allow an effective service level contract to develop, and this can be used to quantify provider performance. According to Panda (2003), Success of a service provider depends on the high quality relationship with customers.

1.3 Key Questions that Guided the Study

i. To what extent does the provider's competitive environment influence institutional management in public universities Nyeri and Kiambu counties?
ii. How do provider Outsourcing guidelines influence institution management efficiency.

2. Significance of the Study

The study sought to determine whether provider's competitive environment influenced institutional management efficiency in public Universities in Nyeri and Kiambu counties. Outsourcing enhances competition in the public educational institutions which is an indirect benefit since being aware that services or office may be outsourced could make those on the college start thinking about efficiency and effectiveness in performance. Outsourcing allows higher educational institutions to be innovative, to test new products and services, to competitively price alternatives, to brand and strengthen their own capabilities, and to focus on what they do best (Bartem & Manning, 2001).

This research expanded the boundaries of knowledge on public universities and education ministry and particularly on the synergies generated by the public universities in meeting the ever expanding training needs in particular and helping attain government developmental goals. The study provided vital information to both the parents and the students on the role of public universities in supplementing their educational needs for self-development and shed light on to the secret of their success. In the Kenya Vision 2030, (Government of Kenya, 2008), it is argued that Business Process Off-shoring (BPO) is a new but promising sector to Kenya and especially the youth. The government seeks to mould Kenya to be among the top three (3) Business Processing Off-shoring destinations in Africa. The research provided information on new business areas that can be exploited and add knowledge in the area of entrepreneurial management in general and outsourcing practices in particular to academia in outsourcing. Finally, the study may assist teachers, educational leaders, and educational stakeholders establish and employ greatly required strategies that increase academic and graduation achievement among students.

3. Theoretical Framework

The main exponent of the resource based theory was Birger (1984) and which is well expounded in his article 'A Resource-Based View of the Firm'. Nevertheless, the origins of the resource-based view can be traced back to earlier research. In retrospect, elements can be found in works by Coase (1937), Selznick (1957), Penrose (1959), Stigler (1961), Chandler (1962, 1977), and Williamson (1975), where emphasis is put on the importance of resources and its implications for firm performance (Conner, 1991, Rumelt, 1984, Mahoney and Pandian, 1992, Rugman and Verbeke, 2002). According to Birger (1984), resource-based view of a firm explains its ability to deliver sustainable competitive advantage when resources are managed such that their outcomes cannot be imitated by competitors, and which ultimately creates a competitive barrier (Mahoney and Pandian 1992 cited by Hooley and Greenley 2005, Smith and Rupp 2002,). Further, RBV theory supports the view that a firm's sustainable competitive advantage is reached by virtue of unique resources being rare, valuable, inimitable, non-tradable, and non-substitutable, as well as firm-specific (Barney 1999). Accordingly, a firm may reach a sustainable competitive advantage through unique resources which it holds, and while these resources cannot be easily bought, transferred, or copied, and simultaneously, they add value to a firm while being rare. It also highlights the fact that a firm's sustainable competitive advantage is not a function all resources. Fundamental similarity in these works is that unique value-creating resources will generate a sustainable competitive advantage to the extent that either through acquisition or imitation. No competitor has the ability to use the same type of resources.

Major concern in Resource based view is the ability of the institution to maintain a combination of resources that cannot be possessed or built up in a similar manner by competitors. Further, such literatures provide us with the premise on which to gauge the sustainability strength of competitive advantage. Further, it depends on the ability of competitors to use identical or similar resources that has the same impact on a firm's performance. Thus, the institution's ability to avoid imitation of their resources should be analysed in depth to understand the sustainability strength of a competitive advantage. According to Black, Boal, (1996), and Grant (1995), resources are the inputs or the factors available to an institution, which helps to perform its operations or carry out its activities. They also recognize that resources, if considered as isolated factors, do not result in productivity; hence, coordination of resources is important. Hooley and Greenlay (2005) assert that the ways a firm can create a barrier to imitation are known as "isolating mechanisms", and are reflected in the aspects of corporate culture, managerial capabilities, information asymmetries and property rights. Further, the other three aspects are direct or indirect results of managerial practices except for legislative restrictions created through property rights. King (2007) asserts that inter-organization causal ambiguity may lead to sustainable competitive advantage for some firms. The degree to which decision makers understand the relationship between organizational inputs and outputs is usually described on a continuum of causal ambiguity (Ghinggold and Johnson 1998, Lippman and Rumelt 1982).

Based on empirical literatures, resource based view provides the understanding that certain unique existing resources will achieve superior performance which finally culminates to a competitive advantage. Imitation of such resources will in extension depend on sustainability of the ability of competitors. However, due to volatility of the contemporary markets, the existing resources of a firm may not be adequate to facilitate the future market requirement. There is a vital need to modify and develop resources in order to encounter the future market competition. An organization is obliged to exploit existing business opportunities to sustain its competitiveness in the future market environments (Chaharbaghi and Lynch 1999), Song et al., 2002.

4. Critical Review of Theories and Gaps

The resource-based view has been criticized for weaknesses. Kraaijenbrink et al. (2010) assesses several critiques on the resource-based view. The following critiques have been discussed. (1) The recourse-based view has no managerial implications, (2) the resource-based view implies infinite regress, (3) the resource-based view's applicability is too limited, (4) sustained competitive advantage is not achievable, (5) the value of a resource is too indeterminate to provide a useful theory, (6) the resource-based view is not a theory that is about the firm and (7) the definition of a resource is not clear to work with.

According to Priem & Butler (2001), the resource-based view misses managerial implications or operational validity. The resource-based view explains that managers have to develop and obtain strategic resources that meet the criteria valuable, rareness, non-imitable and non-substitution (VRIN criteria) and how an appropriate organization can be developed. However, the resource-based view does not explain how managers can do this (Connor, 2002).

According to Priem & Butler (2001) and Collins (1994), the resource-based view entails infinite regress. Firms, who have a capability which they can put in practice best, can be overtaken by a firm that can develop that capability better than firm who is best in practice (Collins (1994) calls this second-order capabilities).

The applicability is too limited. Kraaijenbrink et. al. (2010) works out three points of criticism on the applicability of the resource-based view. First, Connor (2002) argues that the resource-based view does not apply to smaller firms. This because sustained competitive advantage "*cannot be based on their static resources, and therefore they fall beyond the bounds of the resource-based view*" (Kraaijenbrink et. al, 2010).

Second, Kraaijenbrink et al inscribes, "*Miller (2003) argues that the resources a firm needs to generate a sustained competitive advantage are precisely those resources that are hard to acquire in the first place. In one sense, Miller's argument is that only firms that already possess VRIN resources can acquire and apply additional resources; otherwise competitors would acquire them with equal ease. Miller draws our attention to the implicit path dependency within the RVB in that every organization's past shapes its present and future performance when not used to trace back to the ultimate root resources responsible for a organization's SCA, though this does not render the RVB overly problematic. If the RVB's scope includes the individual resources and capabilities of the entrepreneurs that constituted the firm - and we see no reason why it should not - it applies even to newly founded institutions.*"

Thirdly, currently, organizations are in a dynamic environment where innovation and changes are needed to stay ahead of the competition. According to the resource-based view, a sustained competitive advantage can be reached if resources are meeting the VRIN criteria. However, in this constant changing environment, the competitive advantages will be temporary (and not long lasting as Barney (1991) argues). The resource-based view offers a useful framework to gain sustained competitive advantage. However, there are limitations on the resource-based view. Firstly, the resource-based theory is based on the incapacity to do an empirical study on measuring the performance. Because of the heterogeneity of organizations, composing a homogeneous sample is hard or even impossible (Locket et. al, 2001). Secondly, the resource-based view is focused on the internal organization of an establishment and it does not consider the external factors like the demand side of the market. So even if an institution has the resources and the capabilities to gain a competitive advantage, it might be that there is no demand, because the model does not consider the "customer". Thirdly, the resource-based view has a limited ability to make reliable predictions (Priem & Butler, 2001). However, Tywoniak (2007) states that "*the usefulness of RBV appears to be greater in terms of generating understanding and providing a structure for strategizing*." Barney (2001) states "*resource-based logic can help managers more completely understand the kinds of resources that help generate sustained strategic advantages, help them use this understanding to evaluate the full range of resources their firm may possess, and then exploit those resources that have the potential to generate sustained strategic advantage*".

5. Methodology

This study was guided by a mixed method approach because the study collected, analysed and combined both qualitative data and quantitative data (Creswell, 2008). Both qualitative and quantitative data was collected from literature and a combination of primary sources; mainly from academics, administrators and students; and from observation. The major rationale informing the select of mixed method research was its strength in that, there could be insufficient arguments, meaning that neither quantitative nor qualitative may bring about enough evidence since the methods supplement each other. The investigator took qualitative research strengths and mixed them with the strengths of the quantitative research. Although the study was largely qualitative, quantitative data was put to maximum use to make analysis of data meaningful and help in not only arriving at certain conclusions but also helping make suitable endorsements. According to Creswell (2008), when a set of data is used to provide a secondary role in a study based basically on the other data type, the embedded design as a mixed methods design is most appropriate. The researcher used concurrent timing where both qualitative and quantitative methods were implemented during a single phase of the research (Creswell, 2008).The quantitative method was engaged to report the data in this study. According to Creswell (2009), quantitative method involves testing objective theories by examining the relationship among variables

5.1 Sample Size and Sampling Procedures

Bell, (2003) defines sample as a group of people who are used to obtain information about a larger group or a whole population. In this study, a sample size of 560 participants from 3 universities were selected since it will not be possible to include all members. Out of the 560 participants, 233 were sampled from the target population.

Sampling procedures were purposeful and simple random techniques. These techniques were suitable for this study because of the nature of its objectives. For purposes of effective data collection, a sample size of 2 human resource manager 10 deans, 65 heads of departments and 156 lecturers was picked. The decision to use a sample of 233 was based on the suggestion by Nachimias and Nachimias, (1991) who proposed that adequacy and resources should determine the sample size which should be big enough to enable capturing a variety of responses and facilitate comparable analysis.

The simple random sampling method on the other hand was used in obtaining a representative sample. Deming in Cooper & Schindler (2003) argued that there is greater accuracy of results by sampling as compared to studying the entire population. According to him sampling possesses the possibility of better interview (testing), more thorough investigation of missing, wrong, or suspicious information, better supervision, and better processing than is possible with complete coverage. This technique offered the researcher the advantage of being able to calculate the sampling error of measurement and able to give a significant level of confidence. The table below illustrates the sample selected. Sloven's formula was used for determining the minimum number of respondents required for the given population size (Trochim, 2008).

$$\mathbf{S} = \frac{P}{1+P(0.05)^2}\text{, } \textbf{where}$$

S = Sample size
P = Population
0.05 = Level of significance

$$S = \frac{560}{1+560(0.05)^2} = \frac{560}{1+560(0.0025)} = \frac{560}{1+1.4} = \frac{560}{2.4} \approx \mathbf{233}$$

6. Data Analysis and Discussion of Findings

The researcher sampled 233 participants from the three public universities in Nyeri and Kiambu counties. Out of the 233 participants, those who participated effectively in answering the questionnaires and in the interview guide were 213. Therefore, the findings of this research were based on the 213 human resource managers, and lecturers plus 10 deans who were involved in focus group discussions which was a response rate of 95.5%. According to Creswell (2012), 60% of data collected is good enough for analysis.

6.1 Categories of Participants

Table 1 below displayed below shows categories of participants who were drawn from 3 public universities in Nyeri and Kiambu counties. These categories as shown in the said table 1 were 10 (4.3%) deans of schools, 2 (1.2%) human resource managers, 65 (27.9%) heads of departments, and 156 (66.6%) lecturers. All these categories put together formed the 233 sample size. Although the deans of schools and human resource managers categories registered smaller percentages compared to the heads of department and lecturers they never the less gave very valuable contributions in their capacity as leaders

Table 1: Sample Size Determination and Sampling Techniques

Category	Sample Size	% Proportion
Deans of schools	10	4.3
Human Resource Managers	2	1.2
Heads of Departments	65	27.9
Lecturers	156	66.6
Total	**233**	**100**

Source: Researcher 2016

7. Discussion of Findings

The study sought to find out the influence of competitive environment on institution management efficiency in public universities. Data was collected and analyzed with the following conclusions: In this scrutiny, the researcher used tables, frequencies and percentages and examined the data according to the study objectives as it is shown below.

7.1 Student-Teacher Ratio and Institutional Management

The study collected and analyzed data to explore whether Student-Teacher Ratio influenced institution management in public universities and established the following; The study found out that periodical optimal staffing was practiced in public universities with more than half (64.1 %) of the heads of department coming to an agreement This was important because it showed that the universities were committed to continuous review of their staffing for better service delivery. Student – Teacher ratio improved because hiring competent academic resource providers enhanced institutional management efficiency.

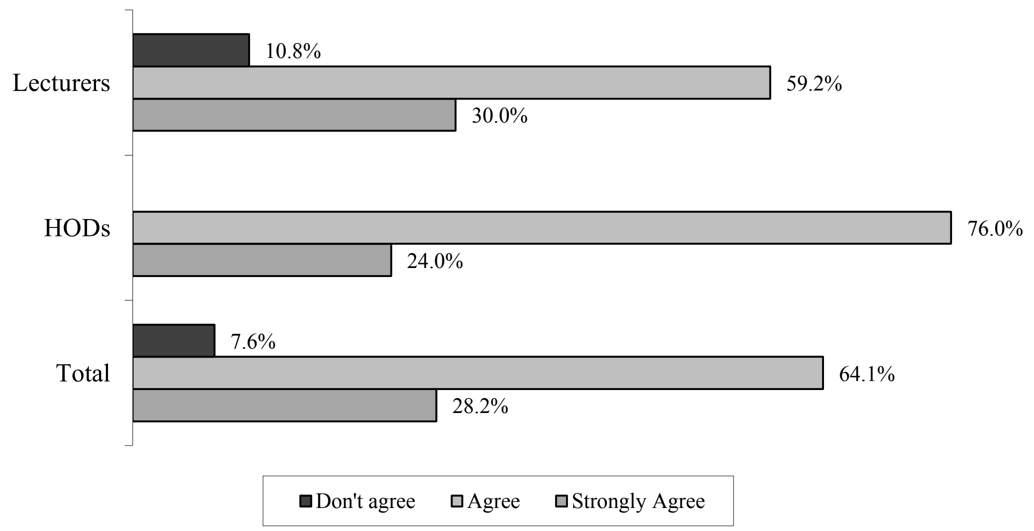

Figure 1: Student Teacher ratio

Source: Researcher, 2017

7.2 Audit Reports and Institutional Management

The study, as portrayed on figure 28, established that majority (43.5 %.) human resource managers agreed that service providers hand in their deliverables on time.

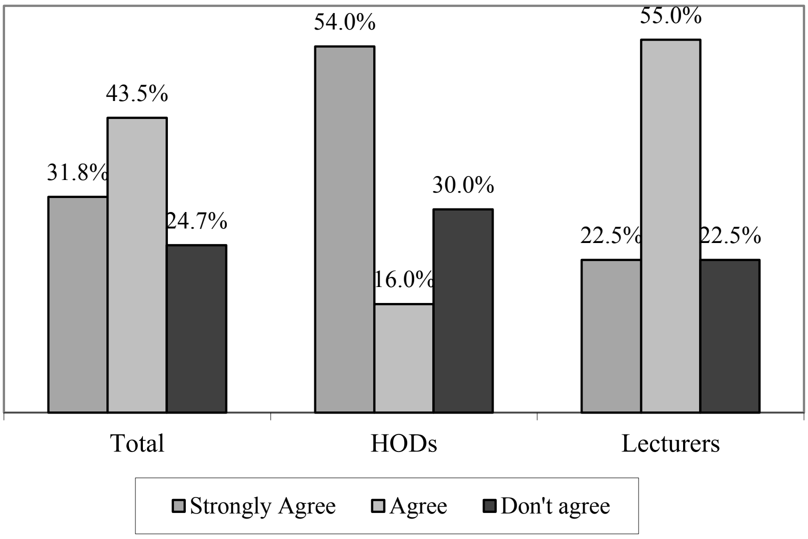

Figure 2: Frequency of Audit Results

Source: Researcher, 2017

A paltry (24.7%) did not agree. On average mean the study obtained M=2.07 and Std. Deviation =.750. The implication of this was that there was need for service providers to improve on their capability to handle change and institutional management efficiency.

7.3 Period for Outsourcing Academic Resource Provider

On the same objective on providers' quality and institution management efficiency the researcher sought to analyse the relationship between the Period the universities had been outsourcing academic resource providers and institutional management efficiency. The study found out that the period most public universities had been outsourcing academic providers was over 7-9 years Most (67.1%) of the human resource managers postulated that most of the universities had outsourced for a period of over 5 years. this has been occasioned by the fact that today's consumer wants and demands personalised attention.. Learners have become averse to conventional learning environment: learning in classrooms; complete assignments within given deadlines and learning under controlled environment. Implication of this was that, learners will seek education where the environment is conducive more enabling and where technology is easily available. The figure below illustrates this view.

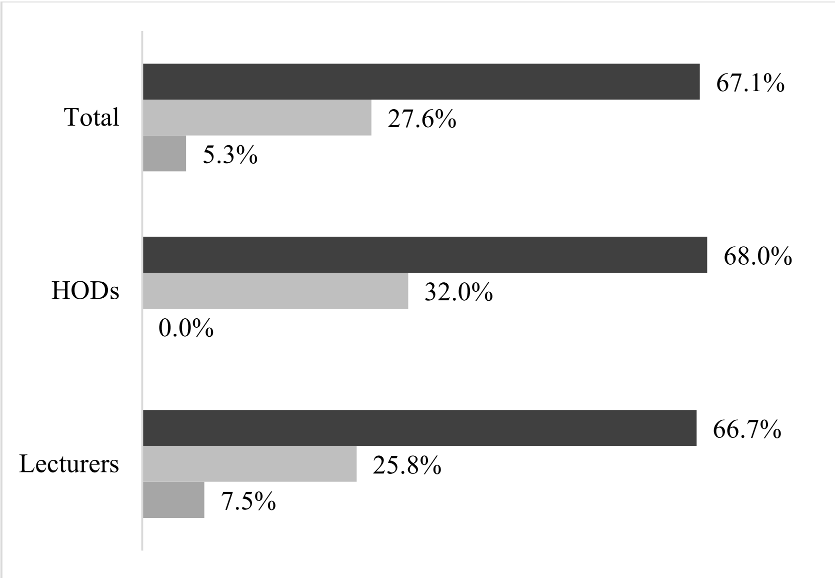

Figure 3: Period for Outsourcing Academic Resource

Source: Researcher, 2017

7.4 Competition Levels with other Universities

When comparing with other Universities, the study revealed as illustrated in the figure 30 below.

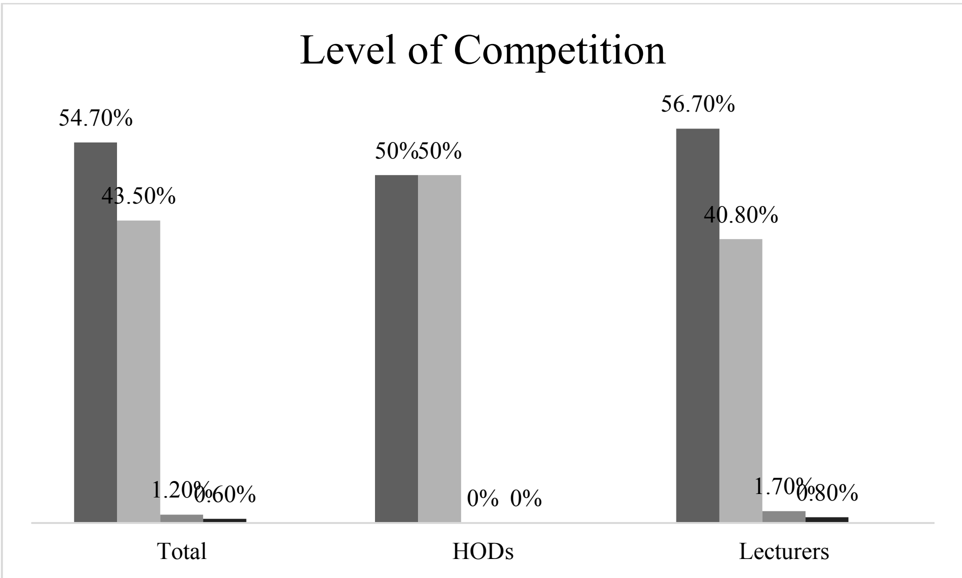

Figure 4: Competition levels with other Universities

Source: Researcher, 2017

The study further investigated the extent to which competitive environment influenced institutional management in public universities in Kenya and found the following as indicated in the Figure 31 below.

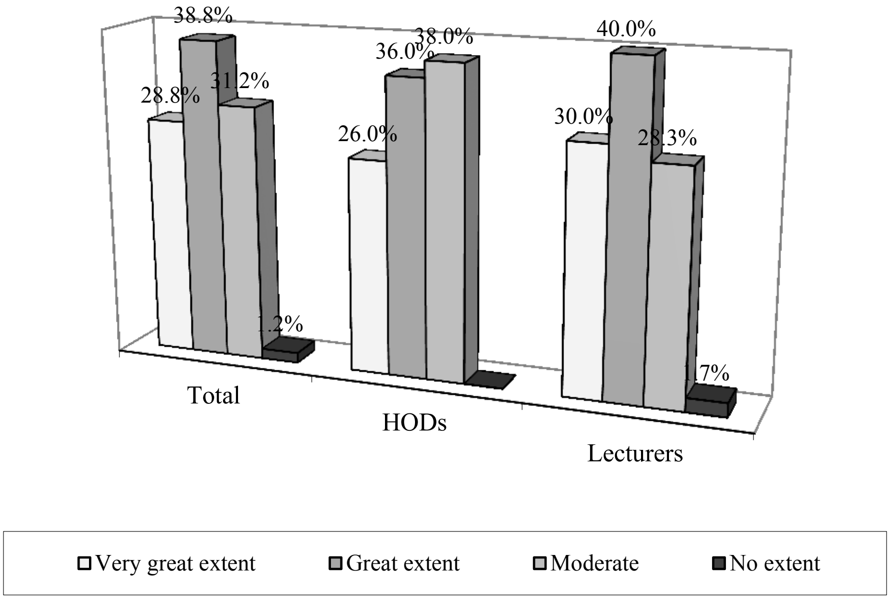

Figure 5: Competitive Environment and Institutional Management
Source: Researcher, 2017

The implication from the table above was that competitive environment affected institutional management to a great extent and was the driving force towards academic outsourcing as supported by (38%) of the heads of department. and (40%) of the lecturers in the public universities. Barney (1991) argues that a firm is said to have a competitive advantage when it's implementing a value creating strategy not simultaneously implemented by any current or potential competitors and when this firms are not able to duplicate the benefits of such strategy.

The core of a firm's competitive strategy consists of its external and internal initiatives to deliver superior value to its customers. It includes offensive and defensive moves to counter the manoeuvring of rivals, actions to shift resources around to improve the organization's long term competitive capabilities and market position and tactical efforts to respond to whatever market conditions prevailing at the moment. The competitive aim is therefore to do significantly better job of providing what consumers are looking for, thereby enabling the universities earn a competitive advantage and out compete rivals in the market place. (Barney 1991)

7.5 Outsourcing Guidelines

The study established outsourcing guidelines used by public universities and found the following results as shown by Figure 32 below. The study responses from the human resource managers indicated that the type of outsourcing guidelines used by public universities were from state statutes who indicated highest percentage of (68.2%) This revealed that public universities relied on state statutes as the best choice to outsource quality providers. A study by Lau (2006) stated that it is crucial to gauge the choice of outsourcing providers based on experiences, specialization and needs. It is critical that institutions build a positive first image to employees by concentrating on the reputation and quality of the provider, as this seems to influence the development of the outsourcing guidelines.

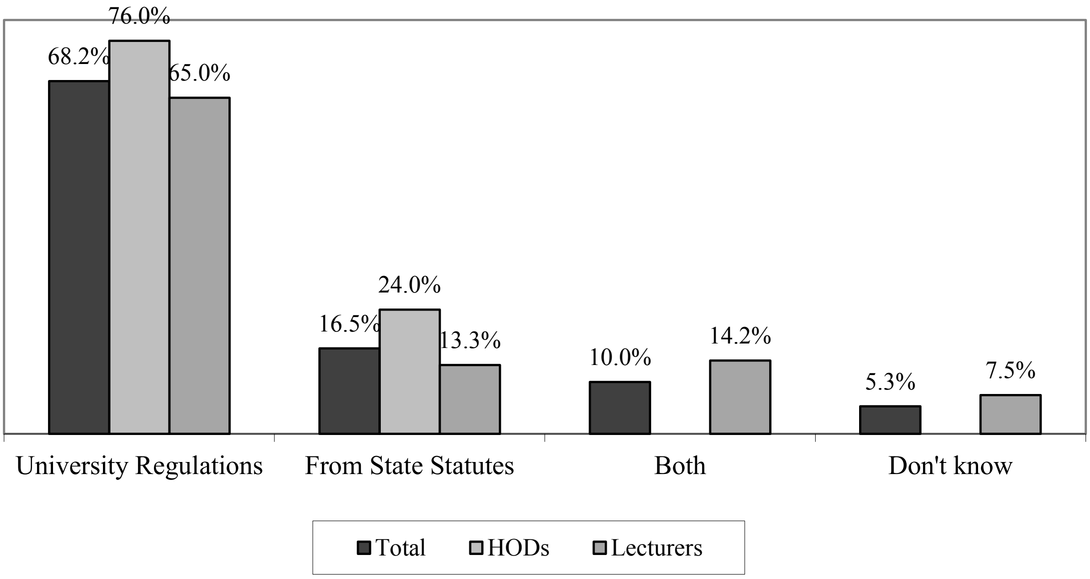

Figure 6: Outsourcing Guidelines

Source: Researcher, 2017

Any inconsistency between the existing organisational and external provider the culture or structure may lead to conflict between internal employees and external employees if not managed appropriately. Hence, time should be spent on developing a relationship between the organisation's employees and the provider. Written contracts are the type of contracts most public universities engage in after a strong support by deans of schools who sided with written contracts. For this option, deans of schools indicated it was most efficient and effective for it is legally binding. Thus, most universities used written agreements to pursue outsourcing contracts.

8. Analysis of Inferential statistics

The discussions on the findings were aligned to the five research objectives. This section stressed how the research addressed gaps raised in the literature review in the second chapter of the thesis. Relying on the contract labour within the classrooms could bring forth a cadre of swappable instructors who hold no sustained responsibility for their students, as such scholars with no attachment to the intellectual life of the institution they are passing through. According to resource based theory as propounded by Tomas (2006) organizations wish to maintain a distinctive product, competitive advantage and will therefore plug gaps in the resources and capabilities in the most cost-effective manner available to do so.

Mahoney and Pandian (1992) postulate that a resource-based view of a firm explains its ability to deliver sustainable competitive advantage when resources are managed in way that competitors cannot copy the product or outcome easily. By virtue of unique resources being rare, valuable, inimitable, non-tradable, and non-substitutable, as well as firm specific, a firm's sustainable competitive advantage is reached (Barney 1999). It is through unique resources held by a firm that would make it reach a sustainable advantage. Further, these resources cannot be easily bought, transferred, or copied, and simultaneously, they add value to a firm while being rare (Barney 1999). Resource based view also informs the fact that some resources of a firm may contribute to a firm's sustainable competitive advantage. Productivity being one of the main concerns of institutional management, many establishments have formal programs for continuously improving productivity, such as a production assurance program. Whether they have a formal program or not, establishments are constantly looking for ways to improve quality, reduce downtime and inputs of labor, materials, energy and purchased services.

8.1 Thematic statistics

The responses of human resource managers indicated that failure of the academic resource provider to handle change greatly influenced institution management efficiency amongst public universities. According to one human resource manager:

> *"There was need for service providers to improve on their capability to handle change"*

One the other hand, heads of departments unanimously agreed that the universities were committed to continuous review of their staffing for better service delivery. They stated,

> *"Student–Teacher ratio improved because hiring competent academic resource providers enhanced institutional management efficiency"*

Conversely, one dean stipulated,

> *"Organizations wish to maintain a distinctive product, competitive advantage and will therefore plug gaps in the resources and capabilities in the most cost-effective manner available to do so"*.

Audits have been there but…

> *"Sporadic enrolment is on the rise propelling the universities to seek extra academic resource providers"*

…said one human resource manager.

8.2 Triangulation and interpretation of data

Looking at the three levels of analysis again, it was seen that competitive environment affected institutional management to a great extent and was the driving force towards academic resource outsourcing Any discrepancy between the existing organisational and external provider culture, or structure may lead to conflict between internal employees and external employees if not accomplished appropriately. Hence, time should be spent on developing a relationship between the organisation's employees and the provider. The facts found in the three levels of data analysis indicated that banking on the contract labour within the universities could bring forth a cadre of swappable instructors who hold no sustained responsibility for their students, as such scholars with no attachment to the intellectual life of the institution they are passing through. It is not known as to when this vice will end and stop hurting learners in institutions and the country at large.

9. Summary of the Study Findings

Audits have been there but sporadic enrolment is on the rise propelling the universities to seek extra academic resource providers. Parties should seriously consider the effects of performance and non-performance upon themselves. Signing contracts is the formality that has the effect of convincing the parties of the importance of their commitments.

9.1 Competitive environment and institution management in public universities

The study found out that periodical optimal staffing was not practiced in public universities with more than half (64.1%) of the heads of department coming to an agreement This showed that the universities were not committed to continuous review of their staffing for better service delivery. Student – Teacher ratio did not recover by hiring academic resource providers to enhance institutional management. This did not enable them remain competitive in higher learning institutions. Further, the study found out that the competition in public universities compared to others was very stiff. Most (67.1%) of the human resource managers postulated that most of the universities had outsourced for a period of over 5 years. this had been occasioned by the fact that today's consumer wants and demands personalised attention. The study established that competitive environment affected institutional management efficiency to a great extent and was the driving force towards academic resource provider outsourcing as supported by 38.8% of the heads of department and 40.0% of the lecturers in the public universities

9.2 Conclusions

Data collected indicated that most public universities were found to outsource academic resource providers for over five years in order to provide adequate materials to students because competition from other universities was stiff in quality education provision. The extent of competitive environments had large influence on academic resource provider outsourcing by management of public universities in Kenya. Public universities were found not to comply with regulatory requirements that were necessary for academic resource outsourcing purposes. Periodical optimal staffing was found to be missing during outsourcing practices in public universities. In addition, no economies of scale was achieved during academic resource provider outsourcing in public universities. Sporadic Audits were performed. Enrolment was on the rise propelling the universities to seek extra academic resource providers. Parties should seriously consider the effects of performance and non-performance upon themselves. Signing contracts is the formality that has the effect of convincing the parties of the importance of their commitments.

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