

Enhancing the Research culture at Strathmore University amongst PhD Faculty Members

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Background to the study

- **Due to the changing nature of University education in Kenya, the Commission of University Education (CUE) has indicated that only PhD holders are mandated to teach in Universities.**
- **Strathmore University is one of the leading private universities in Kenya which started as Strathmore College in 1961.**



- ❖ **To achieve its mission and vision, in the last five years the University has been focusing on growing the number of PhD's amongst their faculty.**
- ❖ **This has resulted in 20 new PhD's (2014) and the number is growing.**
- ❖ **It is known that PhD faculty are the brains behind research in any University.**



Problem statement

- ✓ **It seems however that what constitutes research and a research culture is not clearly understood at Strathmore University since there seems to be lack of a vibrant research culture.**
- ✓ **This lack of research culture is low despite the emphasis on the PhD attainment amongst faculty members.**

Objectives of the study

- 1. To understand what different stakeholders including PhD faculty understand as research and a research culture at Strathmore University.**
- 2. To be able to identify existent gaps and propose initiatives which can enhance the research culture at the University.**

This research arises from pinpointing this problem while I was the Dean of Research at Strathmore University through the Project Action Plan learn't during the International Deans Course for Africa held between July 2015-February 2016 in Osnabreuk & Berlin (Germany),Accra (Ghana) and Addis Ababa (Ethiopia).

Methodology



1.A PAP (project action matrix) was designed to outline the steps that would be taken so as to establish the status of research at Strathmore University.

2.A SWOT analysis was done in order to identify the Strengths,Weaknesses,Opportunities and Threats which face Research at Strathmore University.



3.Data collection was done by developing a questionnaire and distributing to different stakeholders in the University including PhD faculty so as to capture their understanding of a research culture and other related questions.

RESULTS:SWOT ANALYSIS



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Strengths

- SU has access to electronic databases, wireless technology and good facilities
- There is ease of access to these resources
- Institutional awareness of need to improve Research
- Qualified and educated faculty with PhD

Weaknesses

- Lack of a well developed research culture
- Staff have heavy teaching loads that it may be impractical to expect them to balance teaching and research
- Weak mentorship system between senior and junior faculty
- Small faculty with research track record

Opportunities

- The SU brand and support available for research
- A number of Universities would like to partner with SU,an opportunity to exchange research ideas.
- Training programs available on campus e.g. STARS,SPSS

Threats

- Risk of focusing only on teaching and not advancing research
- Mobility of research competent staff
- Lack of enough external research funding

RESPONSES TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE



1. What constitutes a Research culture?

- **Participating in collaborative/multidisciplinary research on issues affecting the community.**

In another study, developing a research culture requires open and collaborative personal relationships among faculty members (Hannover,2014).



- **Using existing knowledge to innovate new artifacts.**

A university must promote systematic inquiry and reflection on all aspects of social life, extending established knowledge beyond its boundaries (Sawyer,2014).

- **Research incentives for staff and students.**

In a similar study it was found that in order for institutions to develop a culture of research, they must allocate significant resources for faculty training and support (Hannover,2014).



2. What is the status of the Research culture at Strathmore University?

- **Out of the respondents interviewed, 26% responded that it was good, 37 % of the respondents responded it was fair, 0.5 % that it was poor and 1 % that they did not know the status.**



- ✓ **The following were some of their reasons they rated the research culture as good:**
- ✓ **There is an effort to inculcate a research culture through initiatives e.g. Researcher of the Month, Research Week, tracking of research outputs.**
- ✓ **Efforts are made to engage faculty in research**



- **The respondents who indicated that the Research culture at Strathmore University was poor had the following reasons:**
 - ✓ **Research is stagnant after PhD**
 - ✓ **Too much teaching**



3. What needs to be done at institutional level to inculcate a research culture?

- Incentivize research programs.**

In a previous study, an important institutional characteristic that will enhance the research culture is rewarding research equitably. Potential rewards include money, promotion, recognition and new responsibilities (Hannover, 2014).



- **Provide a conducive environment for students and lecturers.**

In other reports, it has been found that providing sufficient resources such as funding, facilities, peer support are important institutional characteristics that facilitate research productivity and hence enhance the research culture (Hannover, 2014).



- **To look at lecturers' teaching load, supervision and grant writing skills.**

Another study indicated that researchers having significant periods of uninterrupted time to devote to scholarly activities enhanced the research culture (Hannover,2014).

4. What needs to be done at individual level to inculcate a research culture?



- **Actively participating in research activities both within and outside SU.**
- **Reduce teaching load for staff to create more time for research.**
- **Receiving Extrinsic motivations e.g. awards, recognition for doing research.**

5. Which initiatives/policies do you think could support research at your Faculty and Strathmore University?

- **Reorganising teaching load to release more time for research.**
- **Having a Research management document.**



- **Communicating the importance of research to faculty despite their heavy teaching load e.g. through a day seminar on the place of research in an academic's life/role of research in building the University/how research helps them advance their career.**



- **Institutionalising training programs such as the Structured Training for African Researchers Program (STARS) program and the African Universities Research Approaches Program (AURA) program .**
- **Making Research funding opportunities available and known.**
- **Strong funding policies to support individual and University lead initiatives**

Conclusion



- ❖ **Studies indicate that in order to enhance research and research culture, emphasis should be on graduate study (Sawyer,2004).**
- ❖ **Strathmore University is therefore on the right track through fast tracking PhD studies of its faculty.**



❖ **However emphasis should be placed on the feedback received from Faculty during this study on how to enhance the research culture at Strathmore University:**

1.Reducing teaching load to create more time for research.



Regarding the heavy teaching load given to faculty including new PhD's at Strathmore University, other studies indicate that it is necessary to create conditions for a soft landing for new appointees to the faculty through initially lighter teaching loads and other special support services, and wherever possible, attachment to senior colleagues as mentors (Sawyer,2004).

Faculty with fewer teaching hours tend to produce more research (Bland et al,2005).



2. Incentivising research so as to make it more attractive.

Incentives that recognize and reward high-calibre research are also key to enhancing a research culture (Hannover, 2014).



3. Research management support.

Some issues that could be tackled through research management include providing guidance to staff about opportunities for funded research and how to access them; development of expertise in such matters as contract development; intellectual property and ethical issues (Sawyer,2004).



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GRAZIE ありがとう HVALA GRACIAS MERCI TACK
THANK YOU DIAKUIU
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