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Joseph M. Kulecho and Linda Kimencu

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Organizational Structure and Institutional Performance in Public Universities: Evidence from The Technical University of Kenya

Joseph M. Kulecho

Department of Business administration
Kenyatta University
jmkulecho2@gmail.com

Linda Kimencu

Department of Business administration
Kenyatta University
kimencu.linda@ku.ac.ke

Abstract

This study examined the effect of organizational structure on the performance of the Technical University of Kenya (TUK). Despite structural reforms in Kenyan universities aimed at improving efficiency and accountability, institutions continue to face challenges related to bureaucratic rigidity, poor coordination, and limited adaptability. The study sought to assess how organizational structure influences communication efficiency, accountability, and adaptability within TUK. It focused on six departments Administration, Finance, Library Services, Procurement, Management, and Quality Management within Nairobi City County. Grounded in the Contingency Theory of Organization and supported by Systems Theory, the study adopted a survey research design targeting a population of 298 staff, from which a sample of 171 respondents was selected using stratified, proportionate, and simple random sampling. Data were collected using structured questionnaires, pretested for validity through expert review and tested for reliability using Cronbach's Alpha ($\alpha \geq 0.7$). Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics with the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Findings revealed that the organizational structure positively affects institutional performance by improving communication, collaboration, and accountability, though moderate rigidity limits adaptability. The study concluded that aligning structure with strategic objectives enhances efficiency and effectiveness. It recommends that TUK strengthen interdepartmental communication, decentralize decision-making, and adopt flexible, participatory structures supported by digital systems. These findings contribute to evidence-based restructuring and provide policy insights for enhancing performance in Kenya's higher education institutions.

Keywords: Accountability, Adaptability, Communication, Organizational Performance, Organizational Structure, Public Universities, Technical University of Kenya

1. Introduction

The way that an organisation is set up means everything in terms of how well that organisation performs (success of the organisation). The way that communication takes place, the way decisions are made and the methods of accountability are all influenced by the structure of an organisation in both public and private sectors. In Higher Education (HE)



Institutions, the structure of an organisation is what drives all academic and administrative functions. Institutions of HE, globally, are reorganising the way that they are structured to become agile, efficient, and responsive to their stakeholders' fast-changing needs and a competitive and technology-driven environment (Nguyen et al, 2024). HE Institutions that develop a clear and defined structure have also realised increased levels of effective communication, efficiencies in the use of resources, and greater employee satisfaction, all of which contribute to improved performance of the HE Institution (Zhou et al, 2022). On the other hand, HE Institutions that have rigid, bureaucratic structures, lack clear lines of authority, and no clear method for reporting to one another have found their operational effectiveness and adaptability to be negatively affected.

Major public universities in Kenya have experienced a great deal of change in their structure and administration as a result of national development goals, such as Vision 2030, and policies established by the Commission for University Education (CUE). The new initiatives aim to improve governance, accountability, quality assurance and performance management at all higher education institutions. Nevertheless, many universities are still facing challenges as a result of structural inefficiencies, overlapping responsibilities, ineffective communication and slow decision-making processes (Nganga, 2020). The Technical University of Kenya (TUK) has also been restructured several times to improve co-ordination, enhance service delivery, increase innovation and improve efficiency. However, problems that inhibit the effective operation of TUK, including operational bottlenecks, limited flexibility and inconsistent accountability mechanisms, still exist.

The higher educational institutions in advanced economies like the USA, UK, and Australia are using a decentralized and participant-oriented organizational structure to meet the needs of academics and the public. In addition, to improve the effectiveness of their institutions by providing them with a more accessible governance system; utilizing results-oriented management techniques; and establishing a framework for collaborative decision-making (Cai & Meier, 2021). The Asian universities are developing hybrid organizational models that blend hierarchical with matrix structures to combine administrative controls while also providing increased opportunities for innovation and flexibility through these new types of organizational structures (Le et al., 2023). The experience from many countries illustrates that organizational structure acts as a significant strategic tool for strengthening the performance of an organization and for maintaining competitiveness within an economy driven by the knowledge-based industry.

Universities in Africa have made changes to how they operate, hoping to become more effective organizations so that they can enhance the way they run and improve their systems of governance, quality assurance and the performance of the institution as a whole. Unfortunately, many of the new policies or procedures, such as centralizing the way a universities are managing day-to-day operations or changing how universities are organized to provide services to students have resulted in many institutions experiencing challenges such as being bureaucratically inefficient and being under-resourced (Getnet Agazu et al. 2025). According to Agyemang and Osei (2022), many Sub-Saharan African universities have a centralized and hierarchical structure that does not expand or support innovative ideas, collaboration among staff members and timely decision-making. In East Africa,



universities have adopted innovative approaches to enhancing institutional efficiency including: Decentralization; Merging with other organizations; And, utilizing results-based management systems that will result in effective organizations. However, there are still many universities that are not aligned with their respective strategic plans because of leadership, autonomy and resource coordination issues; which cause gaps between the organizational structures of universities and the expected levels of performance (Mwaniki & Kinyua 2023). For this reason, understanding the connection between the organizational structure of Technical University of Kenya and the performance of the institution is critical to solving the existing operational problems that prevent the institution from successfully delivering services to its students.

This research will add to the current discussion of organizational design and institutional performance, by providing quantitative and qualitative data from a university in Kenya for policymakers and others who may use this information to support the need for developing policy reforms and changing how Kenyan public universities operate. More specifically, the objective of this research is to find out the relationship between the organizational structure of the Technical University of Kenya and communication, accountability and adaptability of the Technical University of Kenya's organizational structure; thus, creating an avenue for future research and practice by providing finders that could support policy reform and institutional restructuring efforts in the higher education sector.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

In determining organization performance, an organization's structure has a significant impact on how effectively communication flows, how appropriately lines of accountability are established, how well activities are coordinated and the processes by which decisions are made. In terms of post-secondary education institutions, an organization's effectiveness will enable them to achieve high levels of operational efficiency, employee responsiveness and service delivery as well as effectively manage delays, duplication of efforts and poor institution-wide coordination; whereas, poorly aligned organizational structures will create bureaucratic delays and duplicate responsibilities. In Kenya, public post-secondary institutions have engaged in several restructuring efforts with the goal of improving governance, accountability, and institutional effectiveness consistent with "Vision 2030" and the reforms initiated by the Commission for University Education. However, despite these reforms, many institutions still face ongoing issues associated with rigid administrative systems, ambiguous reporting relationships, and inefficient coordination mechanisms (Getnet Agazu et al.)

Due to the significant impact of transforming from a national polytechnic to a fully designated technical university, the Technical University of Kenya (TUK) offers an interesting case for research. The restructuring efforts aimed at providing better operation efficiencies for the institution, increased academic standards by improving the quality of the institution, enabling more effective communication among different departments, and aligning the operations of the institution with the needs of the industry and national development. Although TUK has gone through extensive changes in its organisational structure, the university is still having many operational difficulties such as delays in

administrative processes, overlapping roles across multiple departments, an insufficient amount of inter-departmental collaboration and ineffective accountability mechanisms (Nganga, 2020). Since these operational issues continue to exist, the current organizational structure may not provide adequate support for performing the university's institutional performance objectives.

Research into the organizational structure of higher education institutions has mainly concentrated on broad governance reform as well as the way that universities manage their internal operations as a whole. Empirical research has examined the dimensional aspects of organizational structure and their relationship to the performance of public universities in Kenya (Mwaniki & Kinyua, 2023). Furthermore, while a number of studies have investigated the general challenges faced by institutions, there has been little investigation into how organizational structure shapes the efficiencies of communication, accountability, and adaptability in the context of transitioning technical universities. Thus, there is limited context-specific evidence indicating whether or not TUK's organizational structure is conducive to effective coordination, responsiveness, and performance. The lack of such evidence makes it difficult to develop empirical evidence that supports informed decisions by policymakers, as well as the restructuring of institutions through improved performance of public institutions of higher learning.

1.2 Research Objectives

- i. To assess the effect of organizational structure on communication efficiency at the Technical University of Kenya.
- ii. To examine the influence of organizational structure on accountability, responsibility, and decision-making among staff and faculty at the Technical University of Kenya
- iii. To determine the extent to which the organizational structure supports adaptability and responsiveness to changing educational needs and institutional performance at the Technical University of Kenya

2. Literature Review

Organizational structure significantly shapes how institutions coordinate activities, make decisions, and achieve performance outcomes. A well-designed structure defines roles, authority, and communication channels that enhance efficiency and accountability (Dauda & Lee, 2021). In higher education, organizational restructuring has become a strategic response to environmental complexity, competition, and changing stakeholder demands (Okeke & Mugo, 2022). Studies reveal that clear reporting lines and decentralized systems improve institutional agility and innovation, enabling universities to respond effectively to academic and administrative challenges (Kinyanjui & Otieno, 2023).

Globally, higher education institutions have shifted from rigid hierarchical systems to more flexible and participatory structures that promote collaboration and shared governance. According to Johnson and Park (2020), matrix and network-based organizational structures enhance cross-departmental interaction, reducing duplication of roles and fostering collective problem-solving. Conversely, overly centralized structures tend to inhibit responsiveness and reduce employee motivation. In the context of performance,



organizational structure influences both operational and academic outcomes through improved communication flow, decision-making speed, and resource utilization (Ahmed et al., 2024).

Regionally, African universities face challenges of bureaucratic inefficiency, unclear accountability, and inadequate coordination between administrative and academic units. These structural weaknesses often lead to slow policy implementation and reduced productivity (Mekonnen & Wamala, 2023). Kenyan public universities, in particular, have struggled to align their structures with dynamic performance requirements amid budgetary constraints and leadership transitions (Mutiso & Githinji, 2022). Consequently, institutions such as the Technical University of Kenya must continuously review their structures to ensure strategic alignment with performance goals. An effective structure, therefore, is not merely an administrative necessity but a performance enabler that integrates people, processes, and systems to achieve institutional excellence (Omondi & Kariuki, 2025).

2.1 Theoretical Review

This study is anchored on the Contingency Theory of Organization, supported by the Systems Theory. These two theories collectively provide a conceptual basis for understanding how organizational structure influences institutional performance.

The Contingency Theory of Organization, developed by Lawrence and Lorsch (1967) and later refined by Donaldson (2001), posits that there is no single best way to organize; rather, an organization's effectiveness depends on how well its structure fits environmental conditions. Modern scholars emphasize that structural design must align with contextual variables such as size, technology, and strategy to achieve optimal performance (Miller & Xu, 2022). In the higher education context, the theory explains how universities must continuously adjust their structures to respond to dynamic academic, economic, and policy environments (Omondi & Kariuki, 2025). The theory is anchored in this study because it captures the adaptive relationship between the organizational structure of the Technical University of Kenya (TUK) and its performance outcomes. Effective structures at TUK should therefore reflect the institution's strategic goals, resource capacity, and stakeholder expectations.

Complementing this, the Systems Theory emphasizes that organizations function as interconnected subsystems working toward common goals (Bertalanffy, 1968). Changes in one part of the system, such as restructuring communication channels or redefining roles, influence the entire organizational performance (Agyemang & Osei, 2022). This theory is relevant because it highlights interdependence among departments, illustrating that performance depends on the synergy of structural components rather than isolated units.

In essence, while Systems Theory underscores organizational interconnectivity, Contingency Theory serves as the anchor, guiding the study's examination of how TUK's structure aligns with its performance environment to enhance communication, accountability, and adaptability.

3. Methodology

Quantitative data were collected for this study using a survey research design to explore the relationship between TUK's organizational structure and institutional performance. This research design is suitable because it allows for the collection of standardized responses from employees in TUK's critical functional units; it also allowed for the use of descriptive and inferential statistical analysis using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The target population for this study consisted of 298 staff from the following six TUK administrative/support units: Administration, Finance, Library Services, Procurement, Management, and Quality Management. These units were chosen because they are designed to facilitate coordination, communication, and accountability through policy implementation/service delivery in TUK's organizational framework.

The study targeted a finite population of 298 staff members drawn from six administrative and support departments of the Technical University of Kenya, namely Administration, Finance, Library Services, Procurement, Management, and Quality Management. Since the population is finite, Cochran's (1977) sample size determination formula with finite population correction was applied. First, the initial sample size for an infinite population was calculated using Cochran's formula:

$$n_0 = \frac{Z^2 pq}{e^2}$$

Where:

- n_0 = Initial sample size
- Z = Standard normal deviate corresponding to the desired confidence level (1.96 at 95% confidence level)
- p = Estimated proportion of the population possessing the attribute (0.5)
- $q=1-p=0.5$
- e = Desired margin of error (0.05)

Thus,

$$\begin{aligned} n_0 &= \frac{(1.96)^2(0.5)(0.5)}{(0.05)^2} \\ n_0 &= \frac{3.8416 \times 0.25}{0.0025} \\ n_0 &= 384.16 \end{aligned}$$

Since the study population was finite ($N = 298$), the finite population correction (FPC) was applied:

$$n = \frac{n_0}{1 + \frac{(n_0-1)}{N}}$$

Substituting the values:

$$\begin{aligned} n &= \frac{384.16}{1 + \frac{384.16-1}{298}} \\ n &= \frac{384.16}{1 + 1.2858} \\ n &= \frac{384.16}{2.2858} \\ n &= 168.06 \approx 168 \end{aligned}$$

To cater for possible non-response and incomplete questionnaires, a contingency of approximately 2% was added, resulting in a final sample size of 171 respondents, which was proportionately distributed across the six departments using stratified sampling. Thereafter, simple random sampling was employed within each stratum to select individual respondents.

The sample was made up of respondents selected via stratified random sampling, to provide an appropriate representation of the groups in each department based on their functional role within the university structure. Then the sample was selected by means of proportionate and simple random sampling methods from each of the strata in order to reduce any possible bias in the sampling method and to maximise the representativeness of the sample. Data were collected by the use of structured questionnaire which was designed according to the research objectives. The questionnaire contained both closed and open questions, while the 5-point Likert scale was used to measure respondents' perceptions and attitudes towards the university's organisational structure and institutional performance.

Before collecting data from all participants in the study, ethical approval was obtained through the NACOSTI; the Kenyatta University and the Technical University of Kenya. Participants gave consent, while data provided by the participants remained strictly confidential, as did their identities. In addition, instrument validity was established through expert review and pre-testing for clarity and relevance, and instrument reliability was verified using the Cronbach's Alpha statistical test, where values greater than or equal to .70

demonstrate reasonably good internal consistency among instrument items. Descriptive and inferential statistics were both used when analyzing data collected from participants; descriptive statistics used were means, standard deviations, frequencies and percentages; while inferential statistics were used to test correlational relationships between organisational structure variables with the expected institutional performance variables using a multiple regression analysis technique. Tables and charts were used to illustrate and compare outcomes of the study's findings for clarity.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1 Demographic Data

The study involved surveying 171 individuals from various support and administrative groups within Kenya Technical University. The response rate was very high; thus there was strong evidence of effective participation as well as greater confidence that this survey produced reliable results. Mugenda & Mugenda (2003) indicate that if your study has a response rate higher than 70%, it will give you reliable results. Since a large proportion of respondents were interested in how their work-related issues were affected by disruptions caused by organizational restructuring (that have occurred due to declines in the institution's overall performance), it stands to reason that respondents were not only willing but also able to participate fully in this survey.

Both male and female staff members participated in this research which provided varying levels of opinions regarding how the organization is structured and operates. Additionally, respondents came from a range of different age categories; however, the majority of participants was between 31 and 40 years old which demonstrates that this group represents the majority of those currently working in the active workforce. Younger staff members tend to associate restructuring with new innovative approaches or ways of performing their jobs. In contrast, older staff members associate it more with difficulties they experienced while adjusting to new forms of working and/or operating their organizations.

The survey's results demonstrated respondent's ranges of employment period at TUK were diverse in scope, with the majority having worked at the university between 6-10 years providing equal perspectives on how the restructuring of TUK impacted both experienced and new employees. Furthermore, a large percentage of the respondents were educated at a university, thus demonstrating that the participants had the requisite academic credentials to provide valid opinions about the TUK's organisational structure, communication, accountability and overall effectiveness.

4.2 Effect of Organizational Structure on Performance

The study aimed to assess the effect of organizational structure on performance. The results are summarized and presented in Table 1.



Table 1: Organizational Structure on Performance

Statement	SA		A		N		DA		SDA		Mean	SD
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
The current organizational structure of Technical University of Kenya positively contributes to the university's performance	44	27.16	77	47.53	9	5.56	22	13.58	7	4.32	3.81	1.02
The organizational structure enhances the efficiency of communication and collaboration among different departments at the university	46	28.40	75	46.29	11	6.79	20	12.35	7	4.32	3.84	0.99
The organizational structure of Technical University of Kenya supports the university's ability to adapt to changing educational needs and industry demands	42	25.93	64	39.51	13	8.02	28	17.28	12	7.41	3.62	1.14
The organizational structure has a positive impact on the quality of academic programs and services provided by the university	38	23.46	67	41.36	10	6.17	30	18.52	14	8.64	3.55	1.17
The current organizational structure fosters a sense of accountability and responsibility among staff and faculty at Technical University of Kenya	44	27.16	65	40.12	13	8.02	28	17.28	9	5.56	3.68	1.09
Aggregate Mean and SD											3.70	1.08

The results in Table 1 show that respondents generally agreed that the organizational structure of the Technical University of Kenya (TUK) has a positive effect on institutional performance, as indicated by the aggregated responses to the Likert-scale statements. Most respondents selected “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” across the items measuring communication efficiency, accountability, adaptability, and overall performance. This suggests a generally favorable perception of the existing organizational structure among staff at TUK.

The highest-rated statement was “The organizational structure enhances the efficiency of communication and collaboration among different departments at the university” ($M = 3.84$, $SD = 0.99$), slightly above the aggregate mean. This finding suggests that most respondents perceive the existing structure as effective in facilitating interdepartmental coordination and improving administrative processes. Enhanced communication efficiency is often associated with better service delivery and responsiveness to institutional goals (Nguyen et al., 2024).

Closely following was “The current organizational structure of TUK positively contributes to the university’s performance” ($M = 3.81$, $SD = 1.02$). This implies general agreement that

the institution's structure supports its operational efficiency and aligns departmental roles with the university's strategic objectives. Such findings resonate with Zhou et al. (2022), who observed that clear structural frameworks enhance organizational performance through improved decision-making and accountability.

The lowest-rated item was "The organizational structure has a positive impact on the quality of academic programs and services provided by the university" ($M = 3.55$, $SD = 1.17$), which is below the aggregate mean. The relatively higher SD value indicates variability in responses, possibly reflecting differences between academic and administrative departments in perceiving the impact of structural reforms on teaching and service delivery.

The item "The organizational structure supports adaptability to changing educational needs and industry demands" ($M = 3.62$, $SD = 1.14$) suggests moderate agreement, implying that while the structure supports flexibility, more dynamic adjustments may be needed to respond effectively to external changes in the education sector. Similarly, "The current organizational structure fosters accountability and responsibility among staff and faculty" ($M = 3.68$, $SD = 1.09$) indicates that while accountability mechanisms exist, further decentralization and empowerment could strengthen ownership and responsibility at the departmental level.

In addition, these findings demonstrate that the organizational structure at TUK contributes positively to institutional performance by improving coordination, communication, and accountability. However, variations in standard deviations suggest that not all departments experience these benefits uniformly. This aligns with Getnet Agazu et al. (2025), who emphasized that effective structures must balance hierarchy and flexibility to maximize institutional performance, especially during restructuring transitions.

The responses also revealed that the responsibility for developing the organizational structure at the Technical University of Kenya rests primarily with senior leadership and governance bodies. Central to this process is the Vice-Chancellor (VC), who chairs the University Management Board and provides overall strategic direction. Supporting this role are the Deputy Vice-Chancellors (DVCs), Deans, and Directors of various sections, who collectively contribute to shaping structures that align with academic and administrative needs.

The University Council and Senate were frequently cited as key decision-making organs, entrusted with oversight, policy formulation, and ensuring that the organizational structure supports institutional goals and national education policies. The Human Resource Department also plays a vital role, particularly in job design, staff deployment, and aligning roles with the broader strategic framework. Respondents further mentioned broader participation from committees, administrative units, and employees, highlighting that the process is consultative and engages multiple stakeholders.

The qualitative data from interviews revealed three major themes: enhanced coordination and communication, improved accountability and decision-making, and limited adaptability to change.



Respondents generally agreed that the existing organizational structure has enhanced coordination and collaboration among departments. One administrator explained, *“The current structure has made communication across faculties smoother because reporting lines are clearer.”* This complements the quantitative finding ($M = 3.84$, $SD = 0.99$), where respondents acknowledged the structure’s contribution to efficient communication and teamwork.

A second theme emerging from interviews was improved accountability and responsibility among staff. A senior lecturer observed, *“The structure has defined roles better, so everyone knows what they are accountable for.”* This aligns with the mean score ($M = 3.68$, $SD = 1.09$), indicating that the structure promotes responsibility and performance monitoring.

However, some participants raised concerns about the structure’s rigidity. One respondent remarked, *“While the hierarchy helps maintain order, it sometimes delays decision-making when urgent issues arise.”* This reflects the moderate mean ($M = 3.62$, $SD = 1.14$), suggesting that although the structure supports stability and communication, greater flexibility is needed to enhance adaptability and innovation in response to changing academic and industry demands.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

The findings of this research show that the organisation structure as implemented at the Technical University of Kenya is largely perceived by staff in a positive way with respect to its impact on the key components of an institution's operations i.e. communication efficiency, accountability and adaptability. Overall, when looking at the responses provided by staff, institutional structural arrangement has some relationship to the manner in which each department is able to co-ordinate; share information; and carry out its respective responsibilities within the university system. Moreover, the study demonstrates that communication processes and accountability mechanisms are better supported under the present organisational structure compared to adaptability (functionally) to changes occurring in both the operational needs and externally driven demands as a result of either government regulations or economic conditions.

Furthermore, while the current organisational structure does provide some degree of support to the core administrative functions occurring at the Technical University of Kenya, it continues to pose challenges to ensure that the institution is adaptable to meet the ongoing demands of a developing higher education institution, and the need to respond in a timely manner to essential new requirements. Results from this study suggest that staff member's perceptions of the organisational structure differ based upon departmental experiences and/or positions within the institution.

This additionally provides evidence of differences in how the staff members perceive their organisational structural arrangements based on the functional unit in which they are assigned to, as well as provide evidence of the critical role that organisational structure has



played in developing the processes for institutional operations at Technical University of Kenya. The extent to which organisational structure contributes to institutional process, however, should be interpreted cautiously, given that the primary analytical method used for the study was descriptive summaries of collected data. These findings suggest an ongoing requirement for institutional review of organisational structural arrangements to ensure the continued improvement, responsiveness and overall effectiveness of public higher education institutions.

5.2 Recommendation

The Technical University of Kenya must improve their internal organizational communication systems so that the flow of information among departments is smoother. The best way to achieve this would be to create structured communication processes, enhance coordination systems, and set up regular interdepartmental meetings to deal with identified communication gaps.

To enhance accountability, the university must provide staff with clear reporting lines and roles in order to clarify who is responsible for which tasks. Creating stronger supervisory controls and performance monitoring processes will also help to address the differences in staff accountability experiences identified above. In order to enhance adaptability, the university should create flexible administrative processes so as to enable quick adjustment to changing academic, technical, and industrial requirements. This could take the form of periodic reviews of departmental processes and the adoption of more responsive decision-making methods within existing systems.

According to the study researchers, there also needs to be more collaboration between departments as many coordination difficulties were noted based on their findings. Formalized mechanisms for collaborative interdepartmental work will help provide better consistency in service delivery and decrease the potential for operational delays. Lastly, it is critical for university administration to perform ongoing reviews of the current organizational structure relative to how it best provides for effective institutional performance. These reviews should utilize employee feedback and operational needs both to create a stronger alignment of the organizational structure, communication channels, and accountability systems with the organization's ability to adapt and respond effectively.

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