

# **Influence of Institutional Capacity on Preferred Mode of Learning in the Public Service in Kenya: A Study of Kenya School of Government, Embu Campus**

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## **Abstract**

Training institution administrators face challenges in fully integrating institutional capacity considerations into the selection of appropriate learning modes for public servants. This is largely due to varying levels of awareness among learners regarding continuous professional development and the availability of diverse learning options, which hinders the development of cohesive and inclusive learning strategies. This study aimed to determine the influence of institutional capacity on the preferred mode of learning among course participants at the Kenya School of Government (KSG), Embu Campus. The study was anchored on Organizational Learning Theory and adopted a cross sectional research design. A target population of 40 participants was used, with data collected through online questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive statistics. The findings revealed that availability of learning resources (29.7% strongly agreed and 32.4% agreed) was established to be a strong indicator

of influencing the choice of mode of learning for participants in KSG Embu. Further, availability of technology (45.9%) and institutional infrastructure (43.2%) were established to be averagely important indicators for influencing the choice of the mode of learning for participants in KSG Embu Campus. The choice of the preferred mode of study for majority of participants in KSG Embu Campus was not influenced by the location of the institution (64.9%). Further, 75.7% of the respondents, indicated that the course structure was not an influential indicator in determining the mode of learning. The study concluded that institutional capacity, particularly in terms of availability of learning resources, availability of technology and institutional infrastructure plays a significant role in shaping the preferred mode of learning among participants at KSG Embu Campus.

**Keywords:** Institutional Capacity, Mode of Learning, Availability of Learning Resources, Institutional Infrastructure, Availability of Technology

### **Introduction**

The global commitment to United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) emphasizes the need to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (Akbari & Sahibzada, 2020). Despite this commitment, significant gaps persist, with millions of learners projected to remain out of school and lacking foundational literacy and numeracy skills (UN, 2024). In response, education systems worldwide have increasingly adopted diverse and flexible modes of learning to enhance access, quality, and resilience.

Technological advancements and rapid digitization, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, have fundamentally transformed the delivery of education and training. Institutions are no longer limited to traditional face-to-face instruction but now utilize multiple learning modes, including physical (face-to-face), online, blended, and modular approaches. Among these, blended learning, defined as the integration of face-to-face and technology-mediated instruction, has emerged as a particularly viable model due to its flexibility and ability to accommodate diverse learner needs (Sharma & Shree, 2023).

However, the effectiveness and preference for a particular mode of learning are not determined solely by the availability of technology. They are significantly influenced by institutional capacity, which encompasses infrastructure, human resources, organizational systems, technological readiness, and financial resources (Zamiri & Esmaili, 2024). Institutions with strong capacity are better positioned to implement and sustain multiple learning modes, while those with limited capacity often struggle to deliver effective and inclusive learning experiences.

In many developing regions, including Sub-Saharan Africa, the adoption of Open and Distance Learning (ODL) has been promoted as a strategy to widen access to education and support lifelong learning. Studies indicate that ODL enhances flexibility, expands institutional reach, and improves access to training opportunities (Timotheou et al., 2023,). Institutions such as the University of South Africa (UNISA) have demonstrated the potential of distance education systems in scaling learning opportunities across large and diverse populations (Zamiri & Esmaili, 2024). Nevertheless, disparities in technological infrastructure, institutional readiness, and resource allocation continue to limit the effectiveness of these learning models across the region.

In Kenya, the education and training sector has increasingly embraced blended and online learning approaches to improve resilience, accessibility, and continuity, particularly during disruptions. Institutions are striving to develop adaptive systems that support digital learning while maintaining quality and inclusivity (Simiyu, 2021). However, the success of these initiatives largely depends on the capacity of institutions to support different learning modes effectively. The Kenya School of Government (KSG) was established in 2012 to centralize and enhance the training of public servants in Kenya. By consolidating previously fragmented training institutions, KSG aimed to improve coordination, standardize training delivery, and strengthen public sector capacity. Despite these efforts, challenges related to infrastructure, funding, technological readiness, and administrative processes continue to affect its operational efficiency and training effectiveness. By exploring how the institutional capacity does influence the preferred learning modes, the study provides a critical lens through which institutions can adapt and develop their institutional capacity to meet the diverse needs of adult learners, most of whom balance work, study, and personal responsibilities.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Institutional capacity plays a critical role in the delivery of the various programs necessary for the capacity building of public servants in Kenya for efficient and effective service delivery to citizens. Institutions are striving to develop adaptive systems that support digital learning while maintaining quality and inclusivity (Simiyu, 2021). However, the success of these initiatives largely depends on the capacity of institutions to support different learning modes effectively. The Kenya School of Government (KSG) was established in 2012 to centralize and enhance the training of public servants in Kenya. By consolidating previously fragmented training institutions, KSG aimed to improve coordination, standardize training delivery, and strengthen public sector capacity. However, challenges related to infrastructure, funding, technological readiness, and administrative processes continue to affect its operational efficiency and training effectiveness.

Although previous studies have examined the effectiveness of various learning modes, there is limited empirical evidence on how institutional capacity influences the preferred mode of learning, particularly within public service training institutions in Kenya. Therefore, there exists a gap in context-specific studies examining how institutional capacities influence learning mode preferences within public sector training institutions in Kenya. This study sought to bridge this gap by examining how institutional capacity influences the preferred mode of learning in the public service in Kenya, a case of KSG, Embu Campus.

### *Objective of the Study*

The main objective of the study was to determine the influence of Institutional Capacity on Preferred Mode of Learning among program participants at Kenya School of Government, Embu Campus.

### *Research Question*

What is the influence of Institutional Capacity on the Preferred Mode of Learning among program participants at Kenya School of Government, Embu Campus?

### Significance of the Study

This study contributes significantly to institutional knowledge by highlighting how Institutional Capacity shape the learning mode preferences among the program participants particularly in public service training institutions such as Kenya School of Government. The findings provide actionable insights for policy makers and Institution administrators that can inform policy formulation and institutional capacity development for effectiveness and accessibility of training programs by the public servants. To scholars, the study provides a basis for further investigation into the dynamics of public service training and capacity building in Kenya and other contexts.

### Conceptual Framework

The study conceptualized that Institutional Capacity influences the Preferred Mode of Learning among program participants. The relationship is shown in Figure 1.

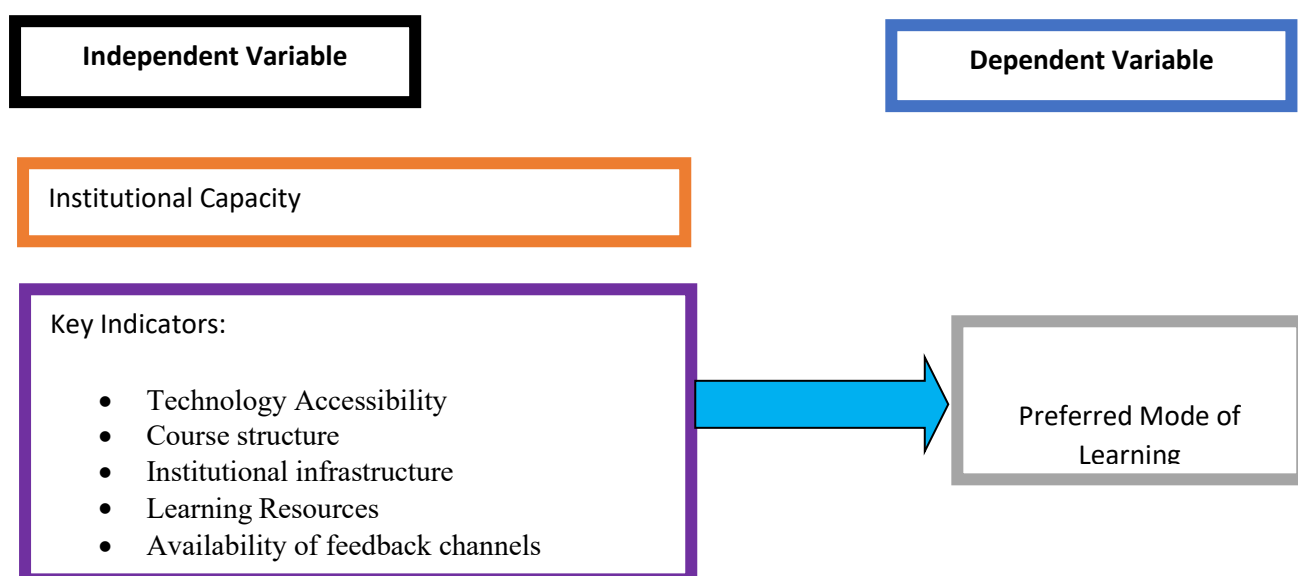


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework (Source: Authors, 2024)

### Empirical Review of the Literature

#### *Institutional Capacity and Preferred Mode of Learning*

Globally, achieving quality education as envisioned under United Nations SDG 4 requires substantial investment in institutional capacity, including infrastructure development, teacher training, and digital transformation (UN, 2024). Empirical studies indicate that learners' preferences and approaches to learning are influenced by a combination of contextual and institutional factors. Gamage, Dehideniya, and Ekanayake (2021) established that students adjust their learning strategies depending on the learning environment, curriculum design, teaching approaches, and broader contextual factors such as culture and background. These findings suggest that institutional elements particularly the structure of programs and the learning environment, play a critical role in shaping how learners engage with different modes of learning. However, the study found no consistent pattern in the adoption of specific learning approaches, implying that institutional conditions may influence preferences in diverse and context-specific ways.

Similarly, Arambewelaa and Hall (2011) found that personal values significantly influence learners' perceptions of their university experience and satisfaction with the learning environment. While the study emphasizes individual-level factors, it also highlights the role of institutions in creating supportive environments that align with learner expectations. This underscores the importance of institutional capacity in designing learning systems that accommodate diverse learner needs, thereby influencing their preference for particular modes of learning.

In addition, Peng and Chen (2019) found that different learning modes significantly influence students' depth of learning and overall outcomes. Their study revealed that well-structured learning modes, supported by appropriate instructional strategies, enhance deeper learning approaches and improve outcomes. This finding reinforces the role of institutional capacity in structuring and delivering learning modes effectively, particularly through program design and content delivery mechanisms.

From an infrastructure perspective, Muchanji (2017) emphasized that technological and physical infrastructure are key determinants in the effectiveness of Open and Distance Learning (ODL). Factors such as internet connectivity, quality of audio-visual delivery, and availability of digital learning platforms significantly affect learner engagement and satisfaction. These infrastructure-related elements are central components of institutional capacity and directly influence the feasibility and preference for online and blended learning modes.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### *Organizational Learning Theory*

The theory is associated with the work of Argyris and Schön, and it focuses on how organizations acquire, interpret, and apply knowledge to improve performance and adapt to changing environments (Guo & Schuurmans, 2007). The theory posits that organizations learn through the collective experiences, insights, and interactions of their members, leading to changes in behavior, practices, and decision-making processes. Key assumptions of the theory include the recognition that learning occurs at both the individual and organizational levels, that organizations have the capacity to detect and correct errors, and that learning is an ongoing and dynamic process shaped by factors such as organizational culture, leadership, and external influences (Hoi, Jin, Zhu & Lyu, 2009).

By examining how institutional capacities for knowledge management influence learning processes within public service organizations, the study can identify strategies to enhance organizational learning and improve the effectiveness of training programs for public servants. Moreover, the theory's emphasis on the importance of creating a supportive learning environment and promoting a culture of continuous improvement aligns with the study's focus on identifying factors that foster a conducive learning environment within public service institutions (Chakraborty, Balasubramanian & Panchanathan, 2014). In the context of a study on institutional modes of learning for public servants, the theory offers a valuable framework for understanding how public service institutions such as the Kenya School of Government facilitate learning and knowledge dissemination among their members.

### *Research Gap*

The studies reviewed revealed that the learners preferred mode of learning is influenced by factors such as individual learner's orientation and awareness raising. Furthermore, most scholarly work undertaken focused on mode of learning at institutions of higher learning and tertiary education, while there exist institutions such as Kenya School of Government mandated constitutionally to train the public service, hence build their capacity to enhance their skills and competences. Therefore, a gap exists in literature on the influence of Institutional Capacity on selection of the Preferred Mode of Learning in the Public Service in Kenya. Consequently, this study sought to address this gap.

### *Scope of the Study*

The study was carried out at Kenya School of Government, Embu Campus in Embu County. KSG is ISO 9001:2015 certified and its mandate is to offer Training, Research, Consultancy Services and Advisory Services to empower the public service in Kenya. Beyond the development of skills and competencies in the corresponding courses and areas of specialization, the institution aims to facilitate the acquisition of wider and deeper knowledge about social and economic issues of national, regional, and global concern.

### **Research Methodology**

The study adopted a cross-sectional design and targeted course participants who had attended training at KSG, Embu Campus between the year 2022 and March 2024. The program participants were selected by purposive sampling method. This comprises the intentional, purposeful selection of people who are able to provide detailed, in-depth information on the subject under study. The study used an online questionnaire for data collection. A total of forty (40) respondents were identified and contacted. The data collected was analyzed using a spreadsheet namely Microsoft Excel. The results were presented in form of charts and graphs.

### **Study Findings**

#### *Response Rate*

The study targeted 40 respondents, but only 37 were able to provide the needed responses, giving a response rate of 93%. The response rate of 93% was deemed sufficient for analysis and reporting in the study.

#### *Descriptive Analysis of Institutional Capacity and Preferred Mode of Learning*

The researcher examined the influence of the following indicators of Institutional Capacity on the Preferred Mode of Learning. These indicators were location of the KSG Embu Campus, availability of technology, the course structure, institutional infrastructure and availability of learning resources.

#### *Location of the Institution*

The study sought to establish whether the location of KSG Embu Campus did influence the participant's choice of the mode of study. Majority of the respondents that is 64.9 %, indicated that the location of the institution influenced their choice of mode of learning.

### *Availability of Technology*

The study sought to establish whether the availability of technology did influence the participant's choice of the mode of study. Majority of the respondents that is 54.1 %, indicated that the availability of technology did not influence their choice of the mode of study, while 45.9%, of the respondents indicated that technology availability influenced their choice of mode of learning.

### *Course Structure*

The study sought to establish whether the structure of the course the participants were to undertake did influence their choice of the mode of study. Majority of the respondents that is 75.7%, indicated that the course structure did not influence their choice of the mode of study, while 24.3%, of the respondents indicated that the course structure influenced their choice of mode of learning.

However, it's worth noting that the respondents who indicated that the course structure influenced their decision on the mode of study further qualified their decision by indicating that the course met their objectives and was relevant to their career progression. Further, the accessibility of lecturers for consultation and their commitment, and their use of technology went a mile further to influence the participants' choice of mode of learning.

### *The Institutional Infrastructure*

The study sought to establish whether the institutional infrastructure did influence participant's choice of the mode of study. Slightly more than half of the respondents that is 56.8%, indicated that institutional infrastructure did not influence the choice of mode of learning, while 43.2% of the respondents indicated that institutional infrastructure did influence their choice of the mode of study.

### *Availability of Learning Resources*

The study sought to establish whether the availability of learning resources did influence participant's choice of the mode of study. 32.4% of the respondents agreed that availability of learning resources did influence their choice of the study mode, 29.7% of the respondents strongly agreed, 21.6% of the respondents were neutral, 10.8% of the respondents disagreed while 5.4% strongly disagreed as shown in Figure 2.

## The Availability of learning Resources

37 responses

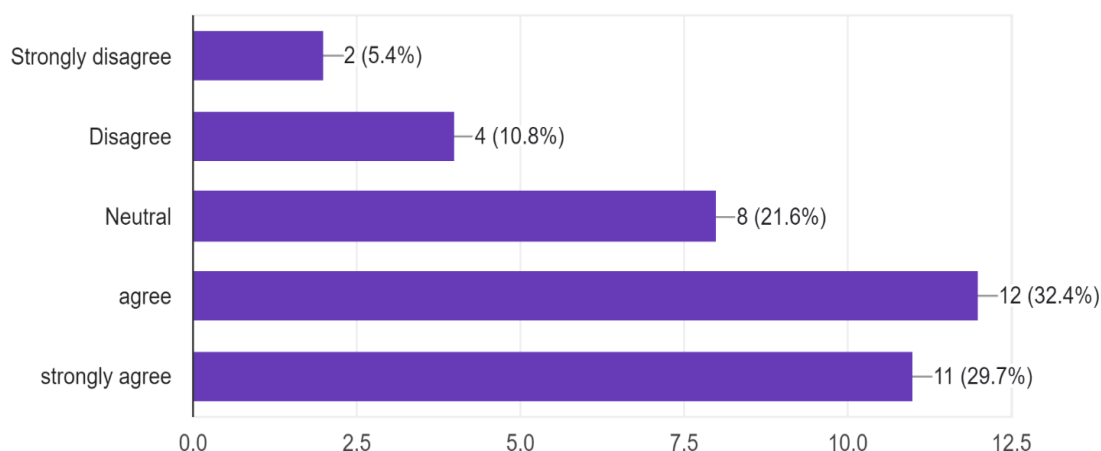


Figure 2: Availability of Learning Resources

**Discussion of the Study Findings**

The study sought to establish the connection between Institutional Capacity and Preferred Mode of Learning for program participants. The independent variable had five indicators namely location of the KSG Embu Campus, availability of technology, the course structure, institutional infrastructure and availability of learning resources. The study found that 64.9% of the respondents indicated that the location of the institution was a factor influencing their choice of mode of learning. Therefore, the choice of the preferred mode of study for majority of participants in KSG Embu Campus was influenced by the location of the institution.

Further, the study established that 54.1% of the respondents did not have their choice of mode of learning influenced by availability of technology. However, 45.9% of the respondents indicated that technology availability influenced their choice of mode of learning. Therefore, availability of technology was seen to be an averagely important indicator for influencing the choice of the mode of learning.

The study further found that 75.7% of the respondents, indicated that the course structure was not an influential indicator in determining the mode of learning. Therefore, the choice of the preferred mode of study for majority of participants in KSG Embu Campus was not influenced by the course structure. However, 24.3% of the respondents indicated that the course structure influenced their choice of mode of learning and this mainly due to factors such as the course meeting their objectives and been relevant to career progression, accessibility of lecturers for consultation and their commitment, and their use of technology.

Further, the study established that 56.8% of the respondents did not have their choice of mode of learning influenced by institutional infrastructure. However, 43.2% of the respondents indicated that institutional infrastructure influenced their choice of mode of learning. Therefore, institutional infrastructure was seen to be an averagely important indicator for influencing the choice of the mode of learning.

Moreover, the study found that 32.4% of the respondents agreed that availability of learning resources did influence their choice of the study mode, 29.7% of the respondents strongly agreed, 21.6% of the respondents were neutral, 10.8% of the respondents disagreed while 5.4% strongly disagreed. Therefore, availability of learning resources was seen as a strong indicator of influencing the choice of mode of learning for participants in KSG Embu Campus.

### **Summary of the Findings**

The purpose of the study was to investigate the nexus between Institutional Capacity and Preferred Mode of Learning among course participants in KSG Embu Campus. The study found that 64.9 %, of the respondents indicated that the location of the institution was a factor influencing their choice of mode of learning. Therefore, the choice of the preferred mode of study for majority of participants in KSG Embu Campus was influenced by the location of the institution. Further, 75.7% of the respondents, indicated that the course structure was not an influential indicator in determining the mode of learning. However, availability of technology and institutional infrastructure indicators were established to averagely important indicator for influencing the choice of the mode of learning for participants in KSG Embu Campus. Further, availability of learning resources (29.7% strongly agreed and 32.4% agreed) was established to be a strong indicator of influencing the choice of mode of learning for participants in KSG Embu Campus.

### **Conclusion**

The study established that the indicators of Institutional Capacity had varied influence on the Preferred Mode of Learning for participants at KSG Embu Campus. Specifically, participant's choice of their preferred mode of learning was greatly influenced by the availability of learning resources, location of the institution and averagely by institutional infrastructure and availability of technology. Therefore, availability of learning resources, location of the institution and; averagely institutional infrastructure and availability of technology indicators were established as critical factors that influenced participant's choice of the mode of learning at KSG Embu Campus. The authors make a theoretical contribution by establishing existence of a significant relationship between availability of learning resources, location of the institution, institutional infrastructure and availability of technology; and choice of mode of study. Therefore, improvement on the availability of learning resources, institutional infrastructure and availability of technology can influence uptake of the diverse programs offered at Kenya School of Government, Embu Campus.

### **Recommendations**

The study established that availability of learning resources, location of the institution, institutional infrastructure and availability of technology significantly influenced participant's decision on their mode of learning at KSG Embu Campus. Therefore, the study makes the following recommendations; there is need for the National and County Governments, Development Partners and the Private Sector to work closely with Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) such as Kenya School of Government to realize the following recommendations;

- (a) Kenya School of Government to continue to avail necessary learning resources so that they can attract more potential participants to enroll in their programs. This would build capacity of the participants either through upskilling or reskilling hence be able to offer quality services to the public.

- (b) Kenya School of Government to continuously develop its institutional and technological infrastructure to meet the emerging and dynamic market needs and demands. This would be a value proposition.

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