

Higher Education Alignment with Integrated Urban Planning, Housing and Urban Finance in Kenya's Devolved Governance Context

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Executive Summary

Kenya's 2010 Constitution established a devolved governance system positioning 47 counties at the centre of territorial development, infrastructure, housing, and fiscal management. This rapid scoping study assesses whether higher education prepares graduates for this integrated planning–budget–implementation environment.

Analysis of twelve programmes across seven universities reveals a clear two-tier pattern: strong capabilities in spatial planning, studio-based pedagogy, and GIS alongside a systemic absence of urban finance competencies, with minimal coverage of digital planning and climate integration.

Central Finding: Graduates are trained to design cities but not to finance them. No evidence indicates that graduates can prepare county-grade fiscal deliverables, such as County Fiscal Strategy Papers, PPP structures, capital budgets, or climate finance proposals, despite constitutional mandates. This reflects a structural legacy rather than a recent gap: planning education evolved under centralized regulatory systems, while the 2010 Constitution introduced fiscal devolution faster than curriculum revision cycles (5–7 years), creating a persistent mismatch. More fundamentally, this reveals a structural disconnect between higher education outputs and devolved governance demands, where universities produce graduates equipped for spatial design but not for navigating budget systems, financing mechanisms, and institutional delivery processes, resulting in an implementation bottleneck.

Extrapolation from sampled counties indicates systemic under-execution of development budgets, with 60–70% of CIDP priorities lacking viable financing mechanisms. Variations in county typologies further suggest that curriculum reform should incorporate differentiated elective tracks rather than uniform national standards.

Strategic Opportunity: Existing studio structures provide a practical platform for embedding fiscal competencies. A phased reform roadmap (2026–2029), focused on curriculum infusion, CUE accreditation reform, and county–university partnerships, offers a scalable pathway to align education with implementation needs.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

- **AAK** – Architectural Association of Kenya
- **ACU** – Association of Commonwealth Universities
- **ADP** – Annual Development Plan
- **ASAL** – Arid and Semi-Arid Lands
- **CFSP** – County Fiscal Strategy Paper
- **CIDP** – County Integrated Development Plan
- **CPD** – Continuing Professional Development

- **CSCC** – Commonwealth Sustainable Cities Coalition
- **CUE** – Commission for University Education
- **FCDO** – Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office
- **FLLoCA** – Financing Locally Led Climate Action
- **GEDSI** – Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion
- **GIS** – Geographic Information System
- **GREP** – Gender-Responsive Public Expenditure Management
- **ISK** – Institution of Surveyors of Kenya
- **JKUAT** – Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology
- **JOOUST** – Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology
- **KIP** – Kenya Institute of Planners
- **KISIP** – Kenya Informal Settlement Improvement Project
- **KSG** – Kenya School of Government
- **KU** – Kenyatta University
- **KUCCPS** – Kenya Universities and Colleges Central Placement Service
- **KUSP** – Kenya Urban Support Programme
- **M&E** – Monitoring and Evaluation
- **MMU** – Maasai Mara University
- **MoU** – Memorandum of Understanding
- **MTEF** – Medium-Term Expenditure Framework
- **PBB** – Programme-Based Budget
- **PPP** – Public-Private Partnership
- **RTPI** – Royal Town Planning Institute
- **SACPLAN** – South African Council for Planners
- **TA** – Technical Assistance
- **ToC** – Theory of Change

- **TUK / TU-K** – Technical University of Kenya
- **UoN** – University of Nairobi
- **WB** – World Bank
- **WHED** – World Higher Education Database

1. Study Rationale and Policy Relevance

1.1. Urbanisation, Governance Transformation, and the Capacity Question

Rapid urbanisation in the Global South has made cities central to economic and infrastructure development, requiring governance systems that integrate planning with fiscal, institutional, and political processes. These demands now include digital competencies and climate adaptation, which remain largely absent from current curricula. In Kenya, devolution under the 2010 Constitution assigned planning, housing, and fiscal responsibilities to 47 counties, operating through a defined planning–budget–implementation chain (CIDP → ADP → CFSP → Programme-Based Budget). This structure requires professionals who can link spatial planning with fiscal analysis and investment prioritisation, as illustrated in Figure 1.

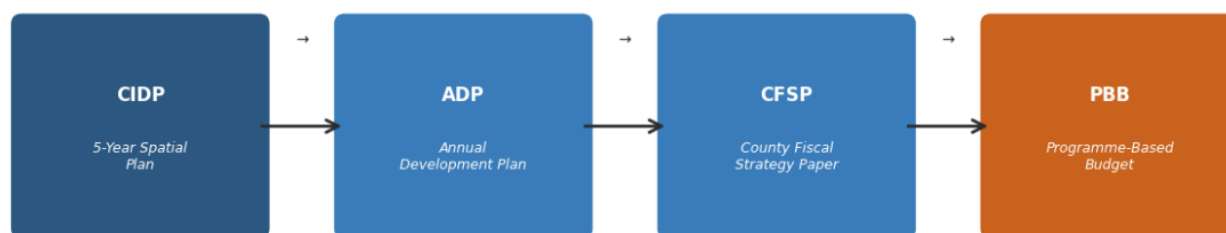


Figure 1: Kenya’s Devolved Planning–Budget–Implementation Chain

A schematic representation of the statutory linkage between spatial planning (CIDP), annual planning (ADP), fiscal strategy (CFSP), and programme-based budgeting (PBB), highlighting the integrated competency requirements for urban governance.

1.2. Higher Education as a Strategic Governance Capacity Pipeline

Universities serve as the upstream component of Kenya's urban governance architecture, supplying planners, geospatial analysts, and housing specialists who populate county governments. The structure of higher education programmes directly affects devolved governance performance; if curricula equip graduates only for spatial diagnosis without fiscal feasibility skills, a structural implementation disconnect emerges between governance responsibilities and professional capability.

1.3. International and Comparative Context

Kenya's experience parallels devolution challenges across the Commonwealth. While South Africa's SACPLAN standards explicitly require municipal finance competency and the UK RTPI mandates "Planning Law and

Implementation" including viability assessment, Kenyan accreditation standards lack equivalent fiscal requirements. This comparative gap underscores the urgency of curriculum reform in Commonwealth contexts where devolution has outpaced professional training adaptation (South African Council for Planners, 2018; Royal Town Planning Institute, 2023; Commission for University Education, 2014).

2. Study Purpose, Objectives, and Research Questions

Study Purpose: This study examines the extent to which Kenya's higher education prepares graduates with competencies required for devolved urban governance, specifically the integration of spatial planning, housing systems, and urban finance.

Objectives:

- i. Map the structure of higher education provision in planning and built-environment disciplines.
- ii. Assess curriculum alignment with devolved governance operational requirements using an integration and alignment framework developed for this study.
- iii. Identify structural competency gaps in development implementation, fiscal systems, digital planning, and climate adaptation.
- iv. Analyse county governance instruments (CIDPs, CFSPs, PBBs) as indicators of professional demand.
- v. Develop a phased implementation roadmap for improving education-governance alignment.

Research Questions:

- i. What is the current structure of planning education in Kenya?
- ii. To what extent do curricula align with devolved governance competency demands, including digital and climate resilience?
- iii. What strategic reforms—sequenced, costed, and assigned—could strengthen integration between spatial planning, housing, and urban finance?

3. Conceptual and Analytical Framework

3.1. The Urban Development Competency Triangle

To capture the integrated nature of urban development central to the CSCC programme thematic domains, this study develops the Urban Development Competency Triangle as its core conceptual framing. This framework identifies three interdependent domains—spatial planning, housing systems, and urban finance—and argues that effective urban development requires their simultaneous integration.

While planning education in Kenya demonstrates strong capabilities in spatial analysis and design, the absence of urban finance competencies constrains the translation of plans into implementable development programmes. In this sense, spatial planning without financial integration remains aspirational rather than operational. The competency triangle therefore provides both a diagnostic lens for identifying structural imbalances in training and a normative benchmark for defining the competencies required in a devolved governance context. Figure 2 illustrates these interdependent competency domains and their role in shaping implementable urban development outcomes.

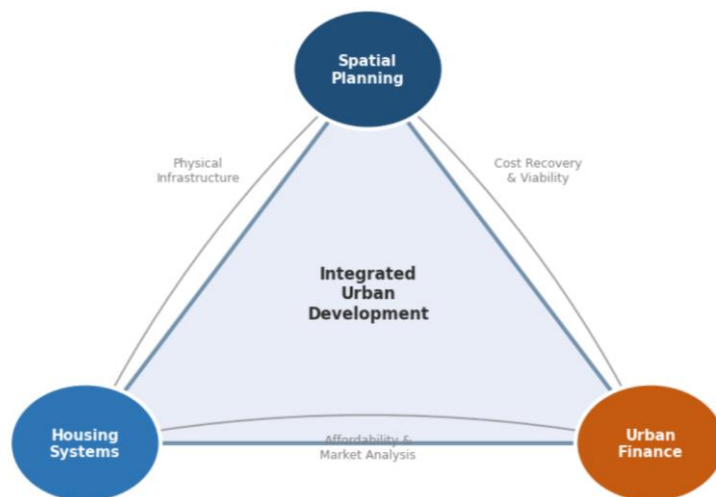


Figure 2: Urban Development Competency Triangle

3.2. Analytical and Integration Framework

Building on the conceptual foundation provided by the competency triangle, the study applies an integrated analytical approach combining the 3D Integration Framework and the 4D Alignment Framework. These frameworks are central to the study’s methodology, as they translate the research questions into measurable dimensions of analysis—assessing both the internal structure of curricula and their external alignment with governance demands.

4.2.1 The 3D Integration Framework

The 3D Integration Framework evaluates the coherence and depth of curriculum design by assessing how competencies are integrated into applied learning, distinguishing between symbolic inclusion and substantive integration. Without this distinction, curriculum analysis may overstate preparedness for real-world practice. The framework assesses three dimensions:

- i. **Thematic Presence** – the extent to which core domains (spatial planning, housing, urban finance, digital systems, and climate adaptation) are substantively represented within curricula.



- ii. **Synthetic Tasks** – the degree to which programmes incorporate integrative learning approaches such as studio work, field-based learning, and capstone projects that simulate real-world complexity.
- iii. **Systemic Framing** – the extent to which urban systems are presented as interconnected fiscal, ecological, and institutional systems rather than isolated technical components.

Through these dimensions, the 3D framework provides a structured method for evaluating whether curricula produce systems-oriented professionals capable of navigating the planning–budget–implementation chain. The analytical structure applied in this study is illustrated in Figure 3.

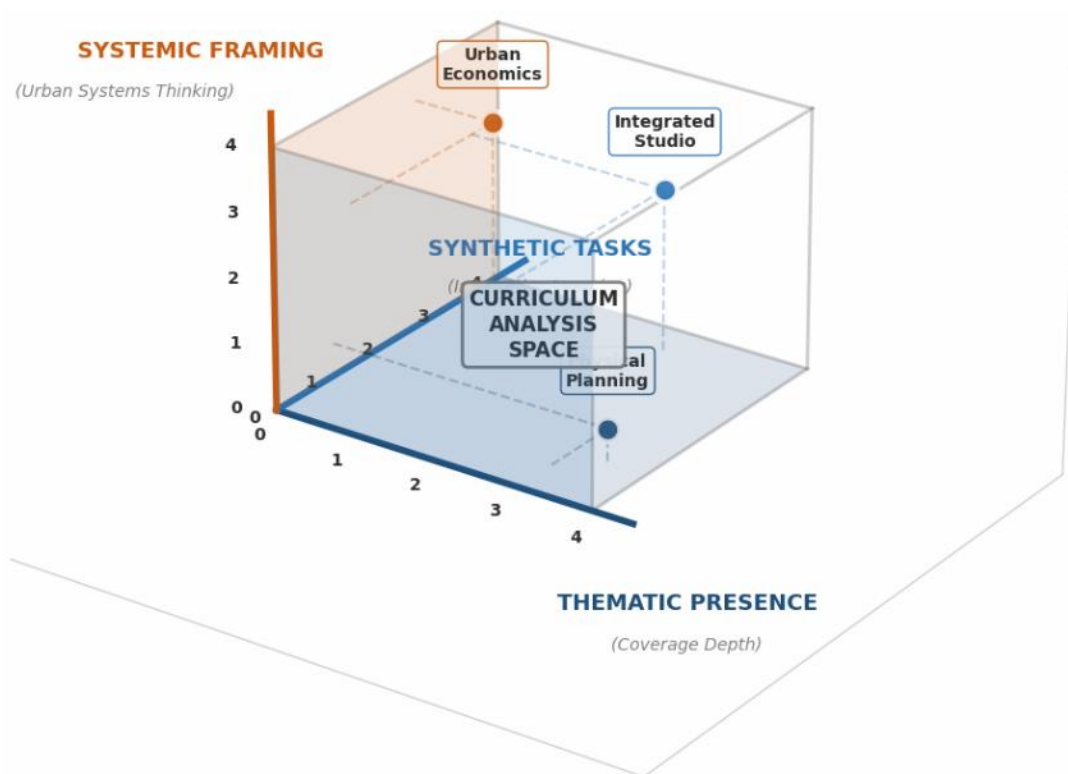


Figure 3: 3D Integration Framework for Curriculum Analysis

4.2.2 The 4D Alignment Framework

The 4D Alignment Framework complements curriculum analysis by assessing how well higher education outputs align with devolved governance requirements, ensuring that graduate competencies match real-world institutional, policy, and implementation needs. It assesses alignment across four dimensions:

- i. **Substantive Alignment** – the relevance of curriculum content to county policy instruments such as CIDPs, CFSPs, and Programme-Based Budgets.
- ii. **Pedagogical Alignment** – the extent to which teaching methods simulate real-world constraints, particularly fiscal limitations and institutional processes.



- iii. **Institutional Alignment** – the depth and functionality of university–county partnerships, distinguishing between symbolic engagements and sustained collaboration.
- iv. **Competency Alignment** – the ability of graduates to produce county-grade deliverables, including fiscal strategies, investment plans, and implementation frameworks.

Together, these dimensions enable the study to assess whether higher education is functioning effectively as a capacity pipeline for devolved governance, rather than as an isolated academic system.

4.2.3 Reform Logic and Implementation Pathway

The study establishes a results-chain pathway linking inputs (curriculum infusion, faculty development, partnerships) to outputs (revised modules, integrated studios), outcomes (hybrid professional competencies), and impact (improved county planning and sustainable urban development). This ensures findings translate into actionable governance improvements. The full Theory of Change, including detailed assumptions, risks, and mitigation strategies, is presented in Appendix A.

4. Research Design and Methodology

4.1. Rapid Scoping Approach

This study employs a desk-based rapid scoping design strictly guided by a research protocol (evidence window 2020–2025; delivery window February–March 2025). The study uses multi-source triangulation: curriculum documents (n=34 modules), teaching timetables, graduation records (2020–2025), key informant interviews (n=16), county documents (n=48 from 12 counties), and a 20-document policy corpus.

Table 1: Data Source Weighting and Contribution to Analysis

| Data Source | Weight | Contribution to Analysis |
|--------------------------|---------------|--|
| Curriculum Analysis | 40% | Competency domain scoring, credit-hour mapping |
| Key Informant Interviews | 35% | Practice validation, gap confirmation |
| Document Review | 25% | Policy alignment assessment |

The weightings were determined through a triangulated methodological design that balances both the volume and analytical function of available evidence—with curriculum data (40%) reflecting the most extensive and structured dataset for quantitative competency scoring, interviews (35%) weighted for their critical role in validating findings against real-world practice, and document review (25%) providing contextual policy alignment—while robustness checks using alternative weighting scenarios confirmed that the core findings remain consistent, thereby validating the weighting approach.

4.2. Sampling Strategy

University Sampling: Seven universities were selected using an ACU-provided extract of Kenyan institutions from the World Higher Education Database (WHED) (higher education data © International Association of Universities, supplied 2025), complemented by verification against Commission for University Education (CUE) accreditation records and Kenya Universities and Colleges Central Placement Service (KUCCPS) admission data. The sampled institutions comprise University of Nairobi (UoN), Kenyatta University (KU), JKUAT, Technical University of Kenya (TUK), Maseno University, Maasai Mara University (MMU), and JOOUST. Across these institutions, twelve programmes were evaluated (8 undergraduate, 2 Master's, and 2 PhD).

County Sampling: Twelve counties were purposively selected to ensure representation across four governance and development typologies: Metropolitan Core (Nairobi, Kiambu, Mombasa); Secondary City/Hub (Nakuru, Kisumu, Machakos); Transitioning/Rural (Makueni, Kisii, Trans Nzoia); and Fragile/ASAL/Border (Garissa, Isiolo, Kwale).

4.3. Data Collection

Curriculum analysis evaluated twelve programmes using a 0–4 rubric (see Appendix A). Credit-hour distributions were weighted to calculate domain strength indices. Teaching timetable triangulation validated live delivery patterns for five universities. Key informant interviews (academic staff n=6, recent graduates n=6, county practitioners n=4) were recorded, transcribed, and coded in NVivo 14.

4.4. Limitations

- i. **Documentary Reliance:** Actual teaching practices may vary; timetable triangulation available only for 5 universities.
- ii. **Temporal Distortion:** 2020–2022 evidence window captures COVID-19 disruptions to academic delivery.
- iii. **Rapid Scoping Trade-offs:** Breadth prioritised over depth; findings indicate structural patterns requiring longitudinal verification through graduate tracer studies (2026–2029 cohorts).

4.5. Robustness Checks

To validate the bimodal capability distribution—defined as a consistent pattern where competencies cluster into two distinct groups, with high performance in spatial planning domains and significantly lower performance in urban finance and related implementation competencies—three alternative weighting scenarios were tested for the composite competency scores.

Table 2 presents this sensitivity analysis, demonstrating that even when the relative influence of curriculum data, interviews, and document review is varied, the same two-tier pattern persists. This confirms that the observed bimodal distribution is not an artefact of the original data source weighting but a robust structural feature of the higher education system, consistently supported across all evidence sources within the triangulated methodology.

Table 2: Sensitivity Analysis — Alternative Weighting Scenarios for Competency Scoring

| Scenario | Curriculum Weight | Interview Weight | Document Weight | Urban Finance Mean | Spatial Planning Mean | Key Insight |
|----------------------|-------------------|------------------|-----------------|--------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------------|
| (a) Baseline | 40% | 35% | 25% | 0.8/4.0 | 3.2/4.0 | Primary analysis |
| (b) Curriculum-Heavy | 50% | 25% | 25% | 0.75/4.0 | 3.3/4.0 | Tests syllabus-only bias |
| (c) Interview-Heavy | 30% | 45% | 25% | 0.85/4.0 | 3.1/4.0 | Tests practitioner-perception bias |

Note: Robustness check confirming the 2.4–2.5-point capability gap persists across all weighting specifications. Inter-rater reliability: $\kappa=0.84$.

Findings: Urban Finance scores consistently remained low, within a narrow range of 0.75–0.85 (classified as weak, <1.0), while Spatial Planning scores remained high and stable at 3.1–3.3 (classified as strong, >3.0) across all weighting scenarios. This persistent gap of approximately 2.4–2.5 points, regardless of how the data sources were weighted, demonstrates that the divide between planning strength and financial weakness is a stable and inherent structural pattern, not influenced by the measurement approach. This sensitivity analysis demonstrates that the core finding—systemic urban finance deficit alongside spatial planning strength—is not an artifact of data source weighting but a genuine structural feature of Kenya's higher education ecosystem.

5. Kenya's Built Environment Education Ecosystem and Curriculum Findings

5.1. Institutional Typology and the Planning Spine

The ecosystem comprises seven public universities producing Kenya's urban professional workforce:

- i. Type A — Metropolitan Research Leaders (UoN, KU);
- ii. Type B — Technical Built Environment (JKUAT, TU-K);
- iii. Type C — Regional Planning & Environmental (Maseno, MMU); and
- iv. Type D — Applied Delivery (JOOUST).

Across all seven institutions, a consistent pattern of strength is observed in core spatial competencies—Spatial Planning (3.2/4.0), Studio-Based Pedagogy (3.4/4.0), and GIS/Spatial Analysis (2.8/4.0)—reinforcing the broader finding that planning capabilities are well-developed relative to other domains. This strength is further evidenced by strong alignment with professional accreditation frameworks, including the Kenya Institute of Planners (KIP), Institution of Surveyors of Kenya (ISK), Architectural Association of Kenya (AAK), Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI), and the Commonwealth Association of Planners (CAP).

5.2. The Fiscal Competency Void

This creates a structural implementation deficit. Urban finance competencies are systematically absent: UoN has no municipal finance or PPP modules (curriculum unrevised since 2002); KU's 2024 revision introduces urban economics but not fiscal decentralisation; JKUAT/TU-K/Maseno/MMU have no capital budgeting or municipal budgeting; JOOUST limits finance to construction accounting without municipal fiscal governance coverage.

5.3. Analysis of Curriculum Competency Distribution and Capability Gaps

Table 3: Curriculum Competency Heat Map Across Seven Kenyan Universities (2020–2025)

| Competency Domain | UoN | KU | JKUAT | TUK | Maseno | MMU | JOOUST | National Strength |
|-------------------------|-----|----|-------|-----|--------|-----|--------|-------------------|
| Spatial Planning | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | Leading (3.2) |
| Studio Pedagogy | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 3 | Leading (3.4) |
| GIS/Spatial Analysis | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | Established (2.8) |
| Governance Awareness | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 4 | Mod-High (2.1) |
| Housing Systems | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 | Moderate (1.9) |
| Urban Finance | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | Weak (0.8) |
| Digital/Urban Analytics | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | Nascent (0.3) |
| Climate Adaptation | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | Absent (0.0) |
| GEDSI Integration | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | Symbolic (1.5) |

Note: Scores are presented on a 0–4 scale based on weighted credit-hour analysis of curriculum content.

The structural bimodal distribution is visually presented in Figure 4.

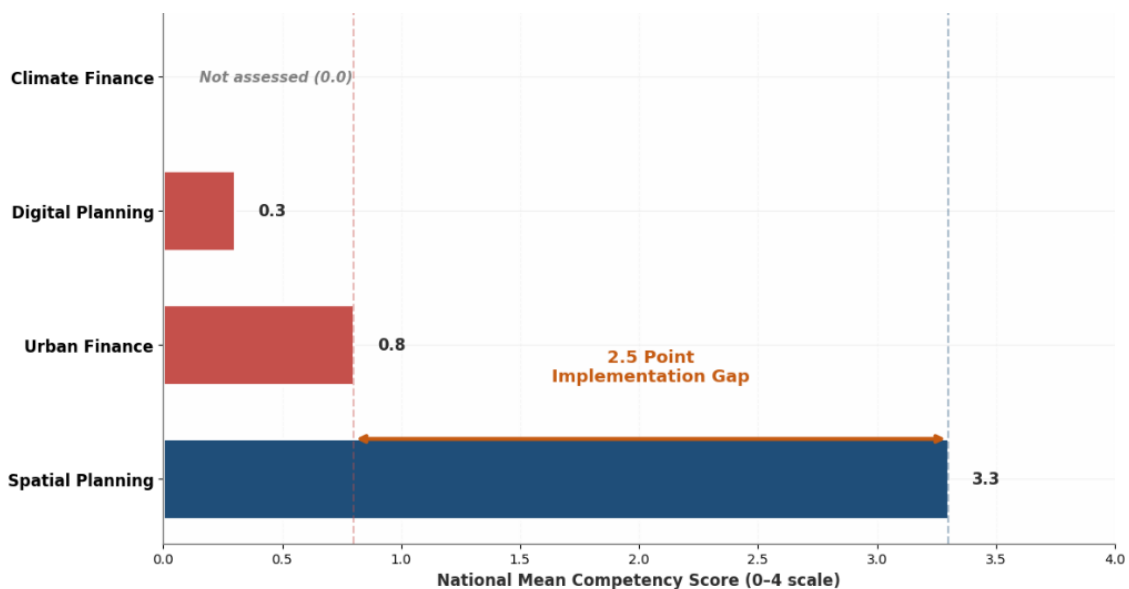


Figure 4: Bimodal Capability Distribution Across Competency Domains

Comparison of national mean scores showing strong spatial planning capacity alongside weak urban finance, digital, and climate competencies.

Key Insights: Urban Finance absence is universal (5/7 institutions score 0). Climate Finance is concentrated in metropolitan-focused institutions (only Type A/B show minimal coverage). GEDSI scores reveal **uniformity across institutions** (consistent 2/4 scores suggest “box-ticking” rather than meaningful gender-responsive fiscal analysis).

5.4. Unpacking the Bimodal Distribution

The bifurcation between spatial (3.4) and fiscal (0.8) competencies reflects path dependency from pre-2010 centralized governance. Historically, Kenyan planning education focused on regulatory control under a centralized state. The 2010 Constitution created fiscal devolution faster than curriculum revision cycles (typically 5–7 years), generating structural lag. This is not merely a “gap” but a legacy of regulatory planning confronting new developmental mandates requiring investment finance capabilities.

5.5. Symbolic versus Substantive Coverage

Analysis reveals symbolic alignment in urban finance: housing finance is mentioned within policy units without fiscal feasibility; governance courses reference “budgets” without CFSP/PBB mechanics. Substantive alignment appears only in GIS labs with verified software training.

Studio briefs (n=24) reveal only 12.5% require structured financial analysis. These “fiscally hollow containers” simulate physical constraints but omit budget ceilings and fiscal feasibility testing. No programme requires students to align studio outputs with County Fiscal Strategy Paper CFSP sector ceilings, presenting cities as

spatial entities rather than integrated fiscal-ecological-social systems. This disconnect is conceptualised in Figure 5.

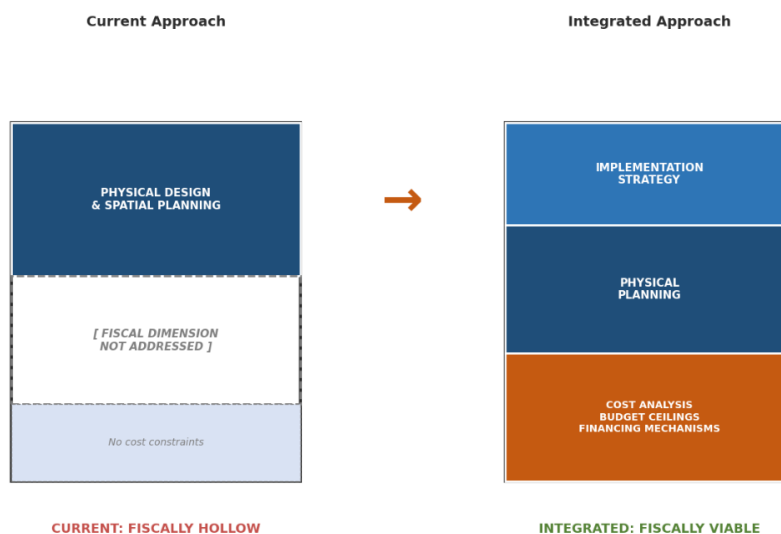


Figure 5: From Spatial Design to Financially Viable Planning

CPD Landscape Assessment: Kenya Institute of Planners (KIP) offers occasional CPD workshops on project appraisal, but no structured certification pathway exists. Kenya School of Government (KSG) delivers county budgeting training but does not partner with universities on pre-service education. This gap confirms the need for institutionalised finance competency in degree programmes rather than ad-hoc CPD.

6. Key Informant Insights and Demand-Side Analysis

6.1. Interview Evidence

Interviews confirm the fiscal execution gap:

- i. A 2024 UoN graduate noted: "Training was design-oriented with minimal fiscal exposure. I can produce masterplans but rely on finance officers for costing."
- ii. A 2023 KU graduate confirmed: "We learned to zone land but never calculated development charges or betterment levies."
- iii. County Directors confirm routine CFSP interpretation demands are "not taught in university," specifically Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) alignment and sector ceiling negotiations.

6.2. Supply vs. Demand Misalignment

Table 4: Supply–Demand Misalignment Between Higher Education and County Governance

| Supply (University Output) | Demand (County Governance) |
|--|---|
| Strong Spatial Analysis | High Implementation Requirements |
| Graduates prepared for regulatory analysis | Professionals needed to translate plans into funded, implementable programmes |
| Studio skills without financial testing | Routine budget interpretation and CFSP alignment |
| Weak Digital/Climate Integration | Growing demand for climate finance and smart city analytics |

6.3. County Governance Demand-Side Analysis

Analysis of 48 statutory instruments from 12 counties reveals integrated capability requirements spanning spatial planning, housing, and urban finance. Recurrent professional demands include township planning requiring infrastructure costing; housing partnerships requiring viability assessment; informal settlement upgrading requiring KISIP/KUSP grant compliance; infrastructure investment prioritisation requiring capital budgeting under fiscal ceilings; and climate adaptation projects requiring FLLoCA grant compliance.

Cross-tabulation by county typology reveals **differentiated competency demands**: Metropolitan Core counties (Nairobi, Kiambu, Mombasa) require PPP structuring and land value capture; Fragile/ASAL counties (Garissa, Isiolo, Kwale) prioritise climate-resilience finance and FLLoCA compliance; Transitioning/Rural counties (Makueni, Kisii, Trans Nzoia) focus on lifecycle costing. This suggests curriculum retrofitting requires **differentiated elective tracks** rather than uniform national standards. The supply–demand mismatch is summarised in Figure 6.

Contrasts graduate capabilities with actual county-level requirements

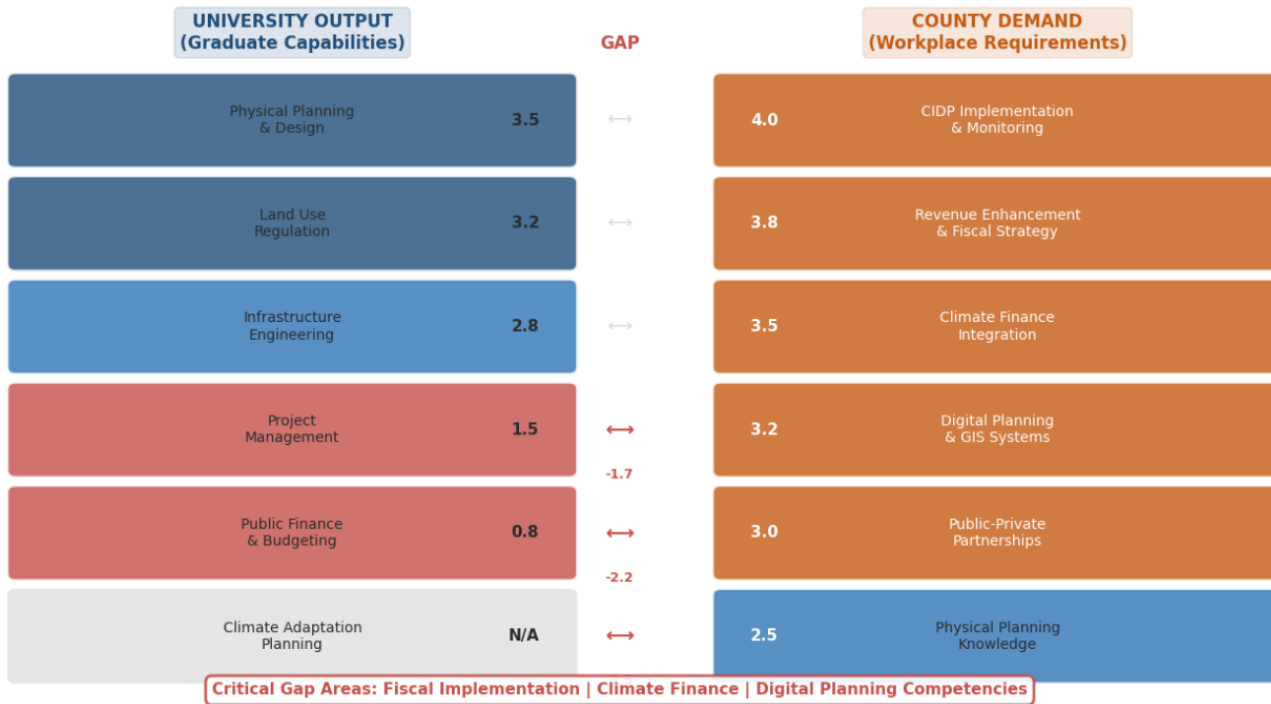


Figure 6: Supply–Demand Misalignment Between Higher Education and County Governance

Figure 7 compares university supply and county demand on a 0–4 scale, where supply scores are derived from curriculum analysis and demand scores from county statutory documents, with the difference between them indicating the magnitude of the competency gap.

7. Integrated System Analysis and Structural Gaps

The preceding analysis reveals a structural disconnect between higher education outputs and the integrated demands of devolved urban governance. While curricula demonstrate strong spatial and technical competencies, they remain weak in fiscal, digital, and climate domains required for translating plans into implementable programmes. This misalignment reflects a broader system failure in which universities, as upstream providers of professional capacity, produce graduates equipped for spatial design but not for navigating budget systems, financing mechanisms, and institutional delivery processes. As a result, a bottleneck emerges at the point of implementation, where planning outputs fail to align with fiscal realities and governance requirements. The systemic relationship between education, governance capacity, and development outcomes is illustrated in Figure 7.





Figure 7: Systemic Relationship Between Higher Education, Governance Capacity, and Development Outcomes

Structural Urban Finance Competency Gap

The combined evidence reveals specific underrepresentation in five critical domains, organized by finance type:

Investment Finance Gaps (Domains 1-4):

- i. **Project Appraisal:** Cost-benefit analysis appears in only 2 of 34 modules (5.9%), essential for determining infrastructure viability under fiscal constraints such as Isiolo's KSh 37.05 billion resource gap.
- ii. **Capital Budgeting:** Processes for prioritising long-term infrastructure within constrained budgets are underdeveloped. Only TU-K's Construction Management includes basic capital budgeting, limiting graduates' ability to translate spatial priorities into MTEF-aligned programmes.
- iii. **PPP Structuring:** Systematic coverage is absent across all seven institutions despite growing county demand for blended financing.
- iv. **Land-Based Financing:** Development charges, betterment levies, and land value capture—critical for Nairobi and Mombasa infrastructure funding—seldom appear as core competencies.

GEDSI-Fiscal Linkage: The absence of GEDSI-responsive fiscal competencies creates **dual inefficiencies:** (1) infrastructure investments fail to address differential access needs, reducing project effectiveness; and (2) missed opportunities for gender-responsive public expenditure management (GREP) weaken allocative efficiency,



particularly in social infrastructure sectors where women constitute primary beneficiaries. Zero modules integrate gender-responsive public expenditure management (GREP) or disability-inclusive infrastructure costing.

8. Strategic Reform Opportunities

Analysis confirms strong spatial analysis, studio pedagogy and GIS capabilities, but weak systemic framing (1.1/4.0) limits implementation linkages, necessitating urgent intervention in urban finance, digital and climate competencies. Structural barriers—including academic silos, accreditation lag and faculty constraints—provide the evidence base for targeted reform.

8.1. Political Economy of Curriculum Reform

Understanding resistance mechanisms is essential:

- i. **Accreditation Inertia:** CUE Standards 2014 lag behind RTPI/SACPLAN due to lack of statutory review mandates.
- ii. **Departmental Silos:** Urban finance is excluded because planning departments lack finance faculty tenure lines.
- iii. **Incentive Misalignment:** Universities are ranked on research output and enrolment, not curriculum relevance to county employers.
- iv. **County Turnover Risk:** MoUs anchored to 4-year CIDP cycles may be disrupted by 5-year governor terms.

8.2. Strategic Mapping: Drivers to Solutions

Table 5: Strategic Mapping — Structural Drivers to Solutions

| Structural Driver | Strategic Opportunity | Intervention Logic | Theory of Change Linkage |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| Academic silos | Curriculum Infusion | Embed finance in existing studios vs. creating cross-dept courses | Output level: Revised modules |
| Weak practice linkages | County-University Partnerships | Use CIDP cycles as institutional anchors | Output level: Partnerships |
| Accreditation lag | Professional Accreditation Reform | Fast-track CUE standards using RTPI templates | Input level: Enabling conditions |
| Faculty constraints | CPD Micro-Credentials | Train-the-trainer via Kenya School of Government | Input level: Faculty development |
| County turnover | County Delivery Laboratories | Institutional MoUs anchored in CIDP cycles | Outcome level: Sustained engagement |
| Incentive misalignment | National Government Demand Signal | Mandate certified fiscal feasibility for CIDP approval | Impact level: Market creation |

Note: Aggregate scores mask bimodal distribution (Table 3). Gap Delta: Implementation minus Spatial capacity.

8.3. Strategic Opportunities

- i. **Urban Finance Curriculum Infusion:** Embed fiscal concepts within current modules; integrate cost-benefit analysis into studio briefs.
- ii. **County–University Studio Partnerships:** Co-design briefs with county departments, engaging students with real institutional constraints.
- iii. **GIS–Fiscal Integration Laboratories:** Upgrade existing GIS labs to combine spatial analysis with revenue modelling.
- iv. **County Delivery Laboratories:** Connect applied research to active projects and absorption bottlenecks.
- v. **Professional Accreditation Reform:** Update CUE standards to require explicit coverage of municipal finance, climate adaptation, and digital planning.
- vi. **CPD Micro-Credentials:** Upskill practicing professionals in public finance management and climate finance. Building on the CPD landscape assessment (Section 6), micro-credentials should complement—not duplicate—existing KIP occasional workshops and KSG county training, potentially through a coordinated certification pathway recognised by professional bodies.

8.4. Phased Reform Roadmap (2026–2029)

This section presents a proposed, sequenced roadmap for implementing the recommended reforms. Its success depends on coordinated partnerships beyond higher education, involving county governments, professional bodies, national agencies, and development partners, as reflected in the actors identified in Table 7.

Table 6: Phased Reform Roadmap (2026–2029)

| Phase | Timeline | Activities | Actors | Indicators | Resources |
|---------------------------|--------------|---|--|---|-----------|
| Diagnostic & Pilot | 0–12 months | Curriculum audit; faculty training at 2 universities; political economy workshops | CUE, Universities, KSG | Faculty trained (n=20); Pilot modules (n=4) | \$150,000 |
| Integration & Partnership | 12–24 months | Studio partnerships in 5 counties; GIS-fiscal labs; micro-credential launch | Universities, Counties, Professional Bodies | Active partnerships (n=5); CPD enrolments (n=100) | \$400,000 |
| Scale & Accreditation | 24–36 months | CUE standards revised; systemwide rollout; tracer study; National Treasury mandate implementation | CUE, All Universities, Development Partners, National Treasury | Programmes updated (n=7); Graduate scores improved (+25%) | \$300,000 |

Note: Indicative costs. Detailed budgets: Phase 1. Timeline assumes immediate commencement post-endorsement.

9. Policy Recommendations and Implementation Architecture

The following recommendations are sequenced for immediate, medium-term, and long-term implementation, with clear accountability assignments, monitoring indicators, and enforcement mechanisms.

Immediate Actions (Year 1):

- i. **For Universities:** Integrate financial feasibility, digital planning tools, and climate adaptation frameworks into existing studios. Require students to evaluate fiscal viability and structure delivery arrangements as standard components. Integrate gender-responsive budget analysis into studio capstones: require students to assess differential infrastructure access by gender/disability, calculate universal design cost premiums, and justify expenditures through equity-impact matrices.
- ii. **For CUE:** Revise accreditation requirements to mandate: (a) Urban finance and capital budgeting (minimum 10% curriculum weight); (b) Digital planning and urban analytics; (c) Climate adaptation and resilience planning; (d) GEDSI-responsive methodologies including gender-responsive budgeting and disability-inclusive infrastructure costing, with applied studio requirements rather than standalone policy modules.

Medium-Term (Years 1-2):

- i. **For CUE:** Create fast-track approval pathways for competency updates (reduce 18-month cycle to 6 months).
- ii. **For Counties:** Deepen engagement through formal partnerships for studios and internships. Provide access to planning data and strengthen feedback mechanisms.

Long-Term (Years 2-3):

- i. **For National Government:** The National Treasury and Ministry of Lands should mandate that all County Integrated Development Plans (CIDPs) submitted for national approval include certified financial feasibility statements prepared by professionals with accredited urban finance training (via KIP/ISK certification pathways).

Implementation Architecture:

Table 7: Implementation Architecture — Accountability and Enforcement Framework

| Actor | Lead Entity | Funding Source | Enforcement Mechanism | Monitoring KPI | Non-Compliance Remedy |
|--------------|-------------------|---------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Universities | Deans of Planning | Inst. budgets; FCDO | Internal review boards | % studio briefs with fiscal | CUE accreditation |

| Actor | Lead Entity | Funding Source | Enforcement Mechanism | Monitoring KPI | Non-Compliance Remedy |
|----------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|---|--|--|
| CUE | CUE Secretariat | FCDO TA; Nat. Treasury | Statutory Instrument under Universities Act 2012 | testing (target: 80% by 2028) % programmes compliant with 10% finance weight (target: 100% by 2029) | review; FCDO grant clawback National Treasury directive; Parliamentary referral |
| Counties | County Directors | CIDP budgets | Mandatory MoU templates from Council of Governors | Active partnerships (target: 5 by 2028) | Council of Governors censure; CIDP approval delays |
| National Treasury | Ministry of Lands/Treasury | National budget | CIDP approval conditionalities | % CIDPs with certified fiscal statements (target: 100% by 2029) | Auditor-General flagging; Constitutional petition |
| Development Partners | ACU/CSCC; FCDO | CSCC grants; bilateral TA | Programme logic & M&E | Tracer study completion; Graduate scores (+25%) | Funding suspension; Programme reallocation |

For Professional Bodies (KIP, ISK, AAK): Update competency frameworks to include fiscal analysis, PPP structuring, and climate risk assessment. Develop certification pathways for "Integrated Urban Finance" specialisations.

Conclusion

Kenya's higher education possesses strong spatial planning foundations in land-use planning, GIS, and studio-based learning. However, structural gaps in urban finance (0.8/4.0), digital planning (0.3/4.0), climate adaptation (0.0/4.0), and GEDSI integration (1.5/4.0) create only partial alignment with devolved governance requirements.

These gaps are driven by institutional silos, slow curriculum approval (premier institutions unrevised since 2002), accreditation lag, weak university-county linkages, and insufficient faculty capacity. They are structural rather than incidental, requiring systematic intervention.

Reform requires retrofitting existing strengths, particularly studios and GIS labs, with fiscal competencies, digital analytics, climate adaptation frameworks, and GEDSI methodologies. This corresponds to the Output → Outcome pathway in the Theory of Change: revised modules and partnerships enabling hybrid professional competency.

International benchmarking demonstrates such integration is achievable within existing institutional frameworks. The proposed retrofitting approach—supported by the phased roadmap and National Government demand signal offers a practical, scalable pathway to strengthening county implementation capacity. This rebalancing would support sustainable, inclusive, and financially viable urban development across Kenya and provide a replicable model for comparable Commonwealth contexts navigating devolved urban governance.

This report was written by Dr Patrick O. Owoche, Director, Open Distance E-Learning (ODeL) at Kibabii University, by way of contribution to the work of the CSCC Sustainable Urbanisation Expert Group, March 2026.

Appendices

Appendix A: Theory of Change

A.1 Overview

The Theory of Change (ToC) outlines how curriculum reform, faculty development, and partnerships translate into improved graduate competencies and urban governance outcomes.

A.2 Results Chain

Inputs → **Outputs** → **Outcomes** → **Impact**

- i. **Inputs:** Curriculum infusion; faculty development; university–county partnerships
- ii. **Outputs:** Revised modules; integrated studios; strengthened partnerships
- iii. **Outcomes:** Hybrid competencies (spatial + financial + implementation)
- iv. **Impact:** Improved county planning, budgeting, and implementation; sustainable urban development

A.3 Assumptions

Studio pedagogy retained; sustained county demand; updated professional standards; continued partner support

A.4 Risks and Mitigation

Institutional resistance (phased reform); faculty gaps (train-the-trainer); county turnover (CIDP-based MoUs)



Appendix B: Scoring Rubric and Methodology

Curriculum Competency Scoring Framework (0–4 Scale)

Scores reflect weighted credit-hour allocation normalized to a 0–4 scale, validated through teaching timetable triangulation and key informant interviews (inter-rater reliability $\kappa=0.84$).

Table 8: Curriculum Competency Scoring Rubric (0–4 Scale)

| Score | Definition | Evidence Standard | Contact Hour Equivalent |
|-------|------------|--|-------------------------|
| 0 | Absent | No curriculum presence; no module references | 0% |
| 1 | Minimal | Mention only (1–2 lectures); symbolic coverage | <5% |
| 2 | Low | Partial module coverage with theoretical treatment only | 5–25% |
| 3 | Moderate | Dedicated module + applied tasks (case studies, exercises) | 25–50% |
| 4 | High | Multi-module integration + studio/capstone application | >50% |

Note: Domain scores: $\Sigma (\text{Module Credit Hours} \times \text{Score}) / \text{Total Credits} \times 4$. Scores <0.5 with symbolic mention adjusted to 1.0. Worked example: Appendix A.

Weighting Methodology:

Domain scores calculated as: $\Sigma (\text{Module Credit Hours} \times \text{Competency Score}) / \text{Total Programme Credit Hours} \times \text{Normalization Factor (4)}$

Worked Example (Urban Finance – UoN Bachelor of Urban Planning):

- i. Total programme credits: 144
- ii. Finance-related modules identified: PLN 201 (3 credits, score 1 = 3); ECO 305 (3 credits, Score 2 = 6)
- iii. Raw weighted sum: $(3 \times 1) + (3 \times 2) = 9$
- iv. Normalized score: $(9/144) \times 4 = 0.25$
- v. **Scoring Adjustment Protocol:** Where raw quantitative scores fell below 0.5/4.0, but qualitative evidence (syllabus audit + graduate interviews) confirmed symbolic mention (1-2 lectures), scores were adjusted to 1.0 (Minimal). This protocol was applied consistently across all seven institutions to avoid false negatives for "present but insubstantial" coverage.

Limitations and Future Research: This rapid scoping study provides baseline diagnostic evidence but requires supplementation through longitudinal graduate tracer studies (2026–2029 cohorts) to measure reform impact.

Appendix C: Robustness / Sensitivity Checks

C.1 Approach

Three scenarios tested:

- i. Baseline (40/35/25)
- ii. Curriculum-heavy (50/25/25)
- iii. Interview-heavy (30/45/25)

C.2 Key Result

Urban Finance remains low (0.75–0.85); Spatial Planning remains high (3.1–3.3).

C.3 Interpretation

Findings are robust: the bimodal pattern is structural, not driven by weighting choices.

Limitations and Future Research

Findings provide baseline evidence; further validation requires longitudinal tracer studies (2026–2029).

Appendix D: References

A. Legal and Policy Frameworks (Kenya)

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Note: Makueni County is used as an illustrative case to demonstrate the statutory planning–budget cycle (CIDP → ADP → CFSP → Budget). Equivalent documents are produced by all counties and are accessible via county portals and national repositories such as KIPPRA.

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